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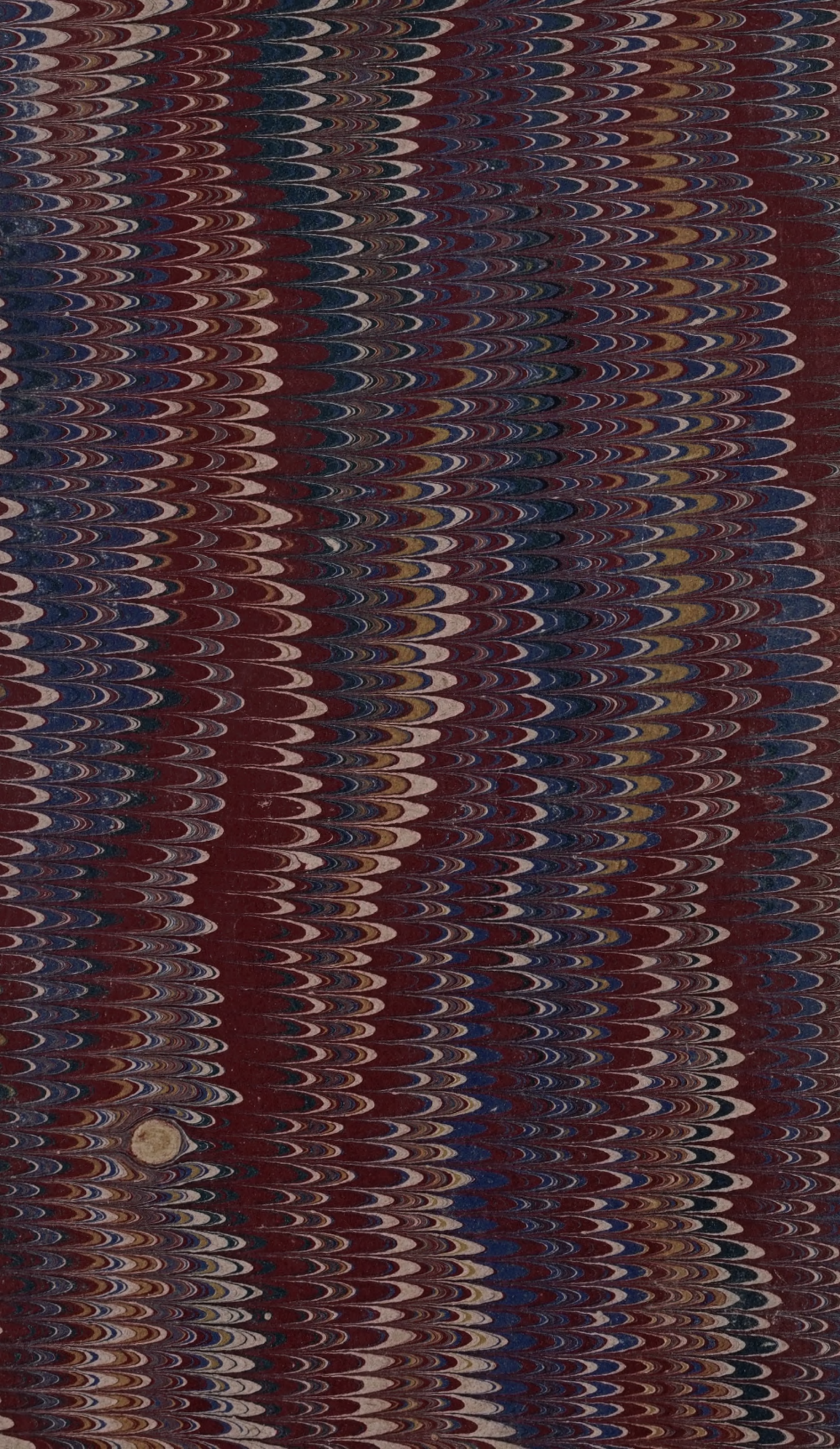
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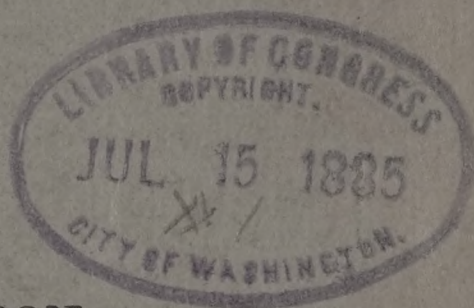
A HARD KNOT

A Novel

By CHARLES GIBBON

AUTHOR OF "

"BY MEAD AND STREAM" "HEART'S DELIGHT" "THE GOLDEN SHAFT" ETC.



Books you may hold readily in your hand are the most useful, after all
DR. JOHNSON

NEW YORK
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
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A HARD KNOT.

CHAPTER I.

A SECRET.

JOHN HADDEN occupied a modest-looking house, to which he had removed on first entering on possession of his small fortune. His household consisted of two persons—a housekeeper, Mrs. Greig, whose husband had been a moulder, and had been accidentally killed in the foundry; the second person was a smart maid-of-all-work.

To this couple the behavior and pursuits of their master were not a little mysterious, and became the subject of much curiosity. Mrs. Greig, especially, was eager to know how he occupied himself; but he had cleverly foiled every effort she had made to pry into his secret, apparently finding amusement in outwitting her, and either being too kind to find fault with her for a propensity which he admitted to be a general failing of her sex, or finding the amusement too good to think of parting with her.

Mrs. Greig always asked, when she handed him his hat, where was he going, and when would he return. To these questions she always received the same answer: "I don't know."

He would walk out with a chuckling, genial smile, and return, perhaps, in half an hour, perhaps not for a week, or even a month. In either case he stepped up to the door with the same smile on his lips as when he had gone out, and a general bearing of having just been round the corner for a few minutes.

At home his manner was quiet and observant. Nothing escaped him, and Mrs. Greig declared that "the auld man" would reckon the hairs of one's head like a flash of lightning. He spent his time chiefly in his library, which was the front room, and which served him for every purpose save a sleeping-chamber.

Two sides of the room were covered with books. One side was occupied by a large, old-fashioned cabinet, in the under part of which he had placed a small safe, and by the window stood a writing-table. The cabinet and the drawers of the table were filled with papers; but these were kept with unusual order—every packet dock

eted and arranged according to date; and everything was locked up, save when he was in the room himself.

There was a thick, morocco-bound book in which Mrs. Greig often saw him writing; and, perhaps because it was the particular book which he took especial care to lock up in the safe, that was the very work the housekeeper was most anxious to read. She had never obtained an opportunity, however; and all that she had been able to learn of her master's ways out of doors was that he frequently visited Mrs. Burnett, an officer's widow, who lived with her daughter in Hill Street. Mrs. Greig's conclusions were neither very generous as regarded her master, nor very respectful as regarded Mrs. Burnett and her daughter.

"Ye hae come hame," said Mrs. Greig, opening the door for him with a half-injured, half-inquisitive expression.

He invariably received the same salutation and the same look, whether he had been out five minutes or five days. He nodded, and, with an unusually preoccupied air, passed into his room. The housekeeper followed, complaining that he had been letting his dinner get "cauld."

"Bring it in as it is," he said, opening the cabinet, and then the safe, forgetting to take off his hat.

Mrs. Greig proceeded to obey, and on her return, followed by the handmaid Betty, carrying a large tray, they found him seated at his desk, busily writing in that particular morocco-bound book which he guarded with so much care. His hat was still on.

Betty gaped, and was properly reprimanded by Mrs. Greig for her ill-manners; but while they were engaged arranging the dishes on the centre-table the good woman more than once peered at her master and the book. He wrote a small, angular calligraphy, however, which would have troubled Mrs. Greig to read even had she been permitted to hold the open pages in her hand.

Everything was ready, she told him, but he did not seem to hear. She waited nearly ten minutes, during which he went on writing.

She laid her big hand on his shoulder, taking advantage at the same time to stare at the book and give him a shake.

"Ye'll let it grow cauld again."

"No, I haven't got it; but it's a child—"

"A what?"

He looked up with his amused grin, and closed the book. He was roused from his abstraction.

"A zoological specimen, Mrs. Greig, which you will maybe see at the Botanic Gardens."

She had a notion that he was quizzing her, but she said nothing. He seated himself briskly, and began to eat as if in a great hurry.

Almost before he had finished he desired her to take the things away, and not to disturb him again until he rang.

As soon as the door had been closed he resumed his place at the desk, reopened the book, and proceeded to write.

The subject of his composition was a minute detail of every circumstance connected with the murder of a woman named Jean Gorbai, who had been found dead in her house in Port-Dundas. Nothing was omitted. When he had completed his report of everything he had heard, seen, and discovered, he made the following memorandum :

“1st. An old gentleman in a brougham.

“2d. Two ladies, apparently mother and daughter.

“3d. A young man, railway guard or porter.

“4th. An oldish man, black beard, scowling face, sou'-wester hat, apparently belonging to some coal-boat or coasting collier. Evidently identical with Bob Little, boatman.

“5th. My man—young, tall, elegant, gray kid gloves ; foot, nine inches from heel to toe, outside ; umbrella with patent ferule.

“6th. Jean Gorbai's husband, a sailor, said to be drowned ; her son Tom, said to be on board man-of-war.

“7th. Jean Gorbai, deceased, reported to have said, in reference to her income, *‘If I want more, I can get it where the rest comes from.’*

“The whole thing rests on these words. The woman Gorbai possessed some important secret affecting the character, position, or fortune, or all three combined, of some person or persons of position. She used her power over them, stretched and abused it, and they crushed her.

“What was the nature of the secret, and how did she come to know it ?

“In her youth, no doubt, she had been a servant in some wealthy family. While there she discovered, by accident or cunning, the secret. What was it ?

“I begin to see an unhappy family affair—a false wife, probably. That will complicate the matter. It will be necessary to find not only the wife, but also the lover, for it is he who has struck the blow. He has done it cleverly, too, with coolness and calculation. The ignorant man, or the merely cunning man, would have made a slip somewhere by which he might have been trapped ; but this crime has been accomplished with marvellous audacity and prevision.

“The villain has left nothing to compromise him seriously. Without me, Captain Mactier would have been satisfied with his conclusion that the motive of the crime was robbery. He would have proceeded on that argument, and—missed the mark.”

He ceased writing ; but, still leaning over the book, he gnawed at

the end of his pen, while his brows contracted, and his eyes were half closed, as if he were shutting out the daylight from his brain, that he might look the more keenly inward.

With a subdued ejaculation of pleasure he hastily recommenced writing :

“Yes, there was a child, and here is the story : The woman Jean Gorbai is in the service of a lady, very rich, high position. Her husband is a merchant, contractor, banker, officer in the army or navy—any of them will do ; but he is called away from home, and is absent more than a year. Meanwhile the lady has a lover. She finds herself about to give birth to a child, and she confides in the woman Gorbai. With her help the child is born in secret and conveyed away, so that the mother’s shame and sin may never be known. The secret is well kept.

“What becomes of the child ? They could not have killed it ? No, for Jean Gorbai, as the accomplice of an infanticide, would no longer be a person to fear. The child lives, is confided to her care, and she rears it. Can it be the son Tom ?

“At any rate, the child is taken away from her, but they cannot get from her the proofs of the birth. She has her grasp upon them strong, as if the child were still under her charge. She wants for nothing ; her silence is worth a fortune. As she grows old she becomes avaricious. Her demands increase with years ; she becomes troublesome, importunate, unbearable. At last she threatens—for human nature is always the same, and can never be satisfied. Then they say, ‘We have endured enough ; let us put an end to it all at once, and forever, by removing this woman from our way.’

“Here my links join. The gentleman in the brougham—he is the father ; the lady who called with the elegant young lady—she is the mother ; but who undertakes to remove the terror ? Not the father, for he is too old. Not the mother, for she would have used poison. The daughter ? Impossible ! Who then ?

“The elegant young man with the gray kid gloves is interested in the mother or the daughter ; both, probably, for he might be the affianced husband of the daughter, who has an immense fortune, while he has only his wits to depend on. To save them from disgrace, and to avoid the possible ruin of his own fortune, he takes the matter in hand, kills the woman Gorbai, and burns the proofs of the lady’s sin.”

There was an expression of intense gratification on his face as he laid down the pen. He shook some fine-ground glass on the paper to dry it ; he never used blotting-paper—that was an article which he considered serviceable only to those who did not care whether or not their writing became known to anybody who took the trouble to examine the blotter. Then he closed the book, and leaned back in

his chair, with a long breath of relief, and eyes dancing with pleasure.

"It's a sad affair, and a bad affair," he muttered, frowning; "but how often within the last few months have I read a similar narrative of a woman wicked or weak, and a man indifferent and a scoundrel, revealed in the Divorce Court. Ugh! Heaven help us! we are weak creatures."

He rose, and locked up the book in the safe, and then locked the cabinet.

"I'll not go to Mr. Lyon to-night; I'll wait till morning, when I can review it all calmly. I'll go over to Hill Street, and have a chat with Mrs. Burnett and Sarah. That'll clear my head, and freshen it for the morning's work."

CHAPTER II.

THE OFFICER'S WIDOW.

MR. HADDEN called loudly to Mrs. Greig for his hat, and the matron, with much contempt for his forgetfulness, informed him that he had it on his head. He was profoundly astonished to find that she spoke truly. He grasped his umbrella, and was about to march straight from the house without a word.

"When'll ye be back?" demanded Mrs. Greig, as usual.

"I don't know," as usual.

"You'll be back the nicht?"

"I don't know."

He went out, and Mrs. Greig watched him jealously till he turned the corner.

"Hill Street again," she said. "He'll be making the officer's widow Mrs. Hadden one o' these days, and then I may go."

She closed the door, and proceeded to scold Betty, the maid, in the broadest dialect, which she only used in its purity when she was in a passion, or speaking familiarly.

Mrs. Burnett, the widow of Lieutenant Burnett, of the 5th Hussars, had for nearly fifteen years occupied the same house in Hill Street with her daughter Sarah. The house was one of the oldest in the street, but was substantial and comfortable. The efforts of active hands and tasteful minds rendered the interior even elegant.

The widow lady had a small fortune, which was sufficient to enable her to live comfortably, and to afford her daughter the best education—which was all she could give her, for she had not sufficient prudence, or she had not sufficient self-denial, to lay by much of her income to provide for her daughter when she died. The in-

come ceased with her life, and so Sarah's prospects were not brilliant.

Of this, however, Sarah never seemed to think. She had devoted her life to watchful attendance on her mother, whose every wish she submitted to and endeavored to gratify. Calm, firm, and intelligent, yet gentle and loving, Sarah was the opposite of her mother in character as well as appearance, and from her fifteenth year became the ruling spirit of the house. Her mother was too indolent to interfere, and without a word permitted the whole charge to devolve on her child.

Mrs. Burnett was one of those easy-natured women who gladly escape all personal trouble and responsibility. She was of fair complexion, lymphatic disposition, and had once been a beauty. She retained some of her former charms still, although in her fiftieth year, and was not a little vain of them. Indeed, the one thing in which she really interested herself was dress. That was her principal fault, barring a little peevishness, which was doubtless the result of an enfeebled constitution.

Sarah was, on the contrary, resolute and forbearing in character. In person she was such a contrast to her mother that nobody could have guessed their relationship from their appearance.

She was about the average height, dark in complexion as a child of Spain. She was not a beauty—her mouth, despite the rich ripeness of her lips, was too large, and her nose a little too prominent for that. To make amends, her hair was thick, jet black, glossy, and soft as silk; her teeth were regular, and pure as pearls, and in her big dark eyes there was a power, an expression, that formed a magnetic attraction, and made one wholly forget the irregularity of the features.

In brief, hers was one of those faces which, once seen, can never be forgotten. One might say that it possessed the light which, like the sun's ray on the sensitive plant, flashed upon the mind and left its imprint indelibly there.

Sarah's filial devotion won for her the admiring attention of Mr. Laurence Hewitt, a rapidly rising solicitor in George Street. Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Hadden were the chief visitors and almost the only friends of Mrs. Burnett.

The old man, indeed, found himself so much at home in Hill Street that he had been more than once on the point of proposing for the widow, old as he was, and long as it had been since his marrying-days had passed. But he so dreaded the loss of the society of that lady and her daughter, which he thought the rejection of such a proposal would render inevitable, that he continued to postpone his offer until there was a probability that it never would be made.

Meanwhile, esteeming her as a daughter, he had taken care to pro-

vide a large space in his will for Sarah, bequeathing to her, in fact, his whole fortune, with the exception of a portion appropriated to the Glasgow detective force.

Naturally, under these circumstances, Mr. Hadden was made quite at home in Hill Street ; and Sarah, who in all the difficulties of the household had either to decide for herself or obtain advice from the first friend that appeared, had gradually learned to make Mr. Hadden her confidant and counsellor.

He never failed her, never considered anything that he might have to do for her a trouble, and delighted in all things to act towards her as a kind, considerate father might have done. He almost grudged the time she gave to Mr. Hewitt, who had been a visitor for two years ; but as during the past six months that gentleman's attentions had assumed the definite form of a proposal of marriage, and as he was, by all reports, an excellent lawyer and a worthy man, Mr. Hadden mentally blessed the young couple, and set about thinking what he should do for them on their marriage.

It was a pity that such a man had been doomed to bachelorhood, for, with an ordinarily sensible woman, he would have formed the centre of a happy home.

As an unusual occurrence, Mr. Hadden had been absent from Hill Street for fifteen days, and he now knocked at the door with eager expectancy of the warm welcome he was to receive.

"Is Mrs. Burnett in?" he inquired when the housemaid opened the door, and he walked straight into the parlor as if it had been his own house.

The parlor was well furnished, and was made a pleasant chamber by the tidiness and tasteful arrangement which Sarah preserved ; but at a glance Hadden perceived that on the present occasion the room was in decided disorder.

The sofa was shoved over to the window, one chair was overturned, the other chairs and table were out of their places ; on the floor lay a crumpled copy of the *Daily Mail*, and everything indicated confusion.

Turning quickly to the girl, who had followed him into the room, he observed now that she looked frightened and pale, and her dress was slightly disarranged.

"Has anything happened?" he demanded, quickly.

"Oh, sir, there's something awfu'!" she cried, with hands raised to her eyes.

"What is it—what is it?"

"You know that for the last month the mistress has been poorly. She eats naething, and this morning—"

"Yes, yes, but this evening?"

"After dinner she took up the paper to read the news ; but she had scarcely looked at it when she gave a scream—such a horrible

scream! Miss Sarah and me ran into the room, and the mistress was lying on the floor as if she was dead. We carried her to her bedroom, and I wanted to go for the doctor; but Miss Sarah said no, it wasna sickness that was the matter wi' her, and that she knew what it was."

"And how is she now?"

"She's come-to again—that is, I suppose she has, for Miss Sarah sent me out of the room. All that I ken is, that she has been speaking for the last hour at whiles—and very loud, for I heard her. Oh, it was awfu'!"

"What was awfu'?"

Mr. Hadden's alarm and astonishment were momentarily increasing.

"What the mistress was saying."

"Eh, lass, were you listening?"

"No, no, maister! I wasna listening; but the mistress cried out as if she was ruined and lost, and she said—"

"Stop," interrupted Mr. Hadden, raising his hand warningly, "stop, my lass; listeners never hear anything good at a key-hole."

The girl was confused, and tried to exculpate herself.

"That will do," he said, with some severity. "If you promise to mind your own business, and leave the affairs of your mistress alone, I will say nothing. You need not call Miss Sarah; I will wait until she comes."

The girl retired, and Hadden, satisfied with the lesson he had given her, picked up the newspaper, and still keeping his hat and umbrella in his hand, settled himself by the window to read.

He had scarcely been seated for more than a couple of minutes, when he bounded to his feet with a cry of amaze and alarm. He had been startled by this paragraph:

"MYSTERIOUS MURDER IN PORT-DUNDAS.—Considerable excitement prevails in the district of Port-Dundas by the discovery which has just been made that a widow woman, named Jean Gorbai, has been murdered in her own house. For two days the house has been closed, and on the door being forced open by the authorities, the poor woman was found lying dead by the fireplace, with two stabs in the back. The police are on the track of the supposed criminals, and every exertion is being made to apprehend them. We will give particulars of this sad and mysterious event in our next edition."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Hadden. "Is it possible that Mrs. Burnett can have any acquaintance—"

He gave himself a shake and sat down, wiping his brow with his handkerchief.

"I think this affair will drive me crazy," he muttered. "I can see nothing, hear nothing, that I do not associate with the woman Gorbal. Ridiculous!"

Curiosity, however, led him to examine the paper closely, and among all its contents he could discover nothing, save the paragraph quoted, which could afford the slightest clew to the cause of Mrs. Burnett's sudden indisposition. There was not another line that could have caused the faintest emotion.

It was singular, and, still more singular, the side of the paper close to the paragraph was crumpled, and partially torn, as if by the spasmodic grip of a nervous hand.

"Most extraordinary!" gasped the detective, fixing his glasses on his nose.

The glasses hung round his neck by a piece of narrow black silk ribbon, but he scarcely ever used them, except when they served to aid him in concealing any expression of his visage which might have betrayed his thought, or when he was exceedingly amazed, as in the present instance, and, out of mere habit, he found occupation with them for his restless hands.

CHAPTER III.

SARAH BURNETT'S DECLARATION.

THE door at this moment opened, and Sarah appeared on the threshold. She was pallid as death, and her unusually calm, resolute face indicated suffering and trouble of the mind in an intense degree. She seemed to be astonished by the presence of Mr. Hadden.

"My dear Sarah," said the good man, advancing quickly to her and taking her hands, "tell me at once what has happened to your mother, and if she is better."

"Mistress Burnett is as well as possible."

The tone was cold, curt, and strange.

"Mistress Burnett!" he ejaculated, puzzled by this new form adopted by Sarah in speaking of her mother; but he went on kindly: "I see you have been greatly agitated."

"Yes," rejoined Sarah, weariedly, and withdrawing her hands from him as she passed one abstractedly over her brow and eyes, as if she were trying to remove the trouble which had settled upon them; "yes, I have sustained a cruel shock."

She was evidently trying hard, trying with all the strength she

possessed, to maintain an air of calmness; to listen to his questions and to answer them quietly.

Mr. Hadden's paternal interest in the girl, so young, and yet afflicted with so deep a sorrow, was excited to a degree.

"My dear child, at least relieve my anxiety by telling me what has happened, and how."

She hesitated, and apparently reflected whether or not she should satisfy him. He was still her chief counsellor in all difficulties, notwithstanding her engagement to Mr. Hewitt; he was the chief friend of her mother; and yet she hesitated whether or not to answer him. The reserve was very unusual, and he concluded that the occasion of it must be peculiar. She seemed to be undecided how to respond, but at length:

"Mistress Burnett has been distressed by learning from the paper that a woman in whom she was much interested has been murdered."

"Eh! what? Did your mother know Jean Gorbals?"

He was so much taken by surprise that he had almost betrayed his connection with the detective force. He, however, checked himself in time, and experienced a glow of satisfaction in finding himself thus by accident on the track of the past history of the murdered woman. He concealed his gratification with an effort.

"The poor woman was in the service of Mistress Burnett at one time," said Sarah, speaking still with hesitation, and in an agitated manner. "She was devoted to her mistress heart and soul, and would have thrown herself into the fire to serve her."

"Then you—you too, Sarah, must have known the woman?"

Sarah had still more difficulty in controlling the agitation of her voice as she replied:

"I have not seen her for a long time, but I know her well; more, I was very fond of her, for she was my nurse."

"She?—this woman?"

Mr. Hadden opened his eyes, drew a long breath, and felt that he was growing sufficiently excited to forget all about the desire he entertained to conceal his private occupation. It seemed as if Providence had chosen him as the instrument of its vengeance and guided his hand. The woman Gorbals Sarah's nurse! Here, then, he would obtain at once the knowledge which, half an hour ago, he had almost despaired of procuring.

He remained mute in his surprise before Sarah, but presently, remembering the necessity to say something in order to avoid compromising himself:

"It is an unhappy affair," he said softly.

Sarah's hands were now clasped before her, and her big dark eyes stared vacantly at the window, as if she were looking towards something far away.

"For Mistress Burnett, I don't know what it may be," she said, in that strange, cold tone; "but for me, it is a misfortune more terrible than you can conceive. The blow which killed that poor woman has stricken my heart also. Her death, dear Mr. Hadden, has destroyed every dream of the future I may have entertained. I had cruel outrages to avenge, cruel wrongs to set right, and that poor woman's death has rendered me powerless, helpless, miserable."

She sank down in a chair now, and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed bitterly; but they were the sobs of a strong nature, which had struggled hard to repress them, and which was still striving to subdue this violent expression of emotion.

"In the name of Heaven, Sarah, explain this to me!" cried her friend, earnestly, distressed and utterly bewildered by her grief. "What causes you all this suffering? The pain must be great to make you speak so wildly."

"And the pain is great indeed. Ah, dear Mr. Hadden, you cannot know how great—I feel as if it were driving me mad; for there are wrongs now that can never be repaired, and I am left helpless, defenceless, against calumny and shame."

"Calumny! shame!—you!"

"Ay, me; for I dare not speak now, for people would point me out as an ambitious adventuress, a false and dishonored woman."

Mr. Hadden did not know what to think. He could not see the remotest connection between Sarah's mother and the death of Jean Gorbai; and he was troubled with a thousand bewildering conjectures.

"My dear child," he said kindly, laying his hand on her shoulder; "I can't understand you. What dishonor, what calumny, can affect you? Has anybody been making a quarrel between you and Hewitt?"

"No, no!" she moaned, swaying her body slightly; "but he, too, will turn from me when he learns—"

"Thunder! learns what? Has anybody been slandering you? Has anybody wronged you? Speak, Sarah! confide in me, as you have always done."

With a calmness as sudden and strange as her exhibition of grief Sarah rose to her feet, hastily wiping her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Yes, you shall know all," she said, in a low, deliberate tone; "I have been trying to bear a burden that is too heavy for me, trying to keep a secret that is killing me. I have need of a wise, true friend to guide and help me, for this has filled me with hesitation and fear."

"You know, Sarah, that you are to me as a child of my own might have been," said the old man, tenderly, having now controlled his passion; "and you know that I will help you if man can do so."

"I know it, good, kind friend!"

With an impulsive movement she snatched his hand and pressed it to her lips.

"I must go to my room. I will be with you in a moment," she said quickly, not giving him time to recover from his astonishment, and she hurried from the apartment.

In a few minutes she returned, carrying in her hand a small deed-box. She carefully closed the door and bolted it. She placed the deed-box on the floor, and directed her companion to be seated by the table. He obeyed, watching her curiously.

She stood opposite to him at the corner of the table, pallid as marble and as coldly calm.

"What if your mother calls?" he said, glancing at the bolted door.

"If Mistress Burnett wants anything the servants will attend to her."

This indifference and coldness in a daughter who had hitherto been so affectionate and dutiful was another subject of amaze to Hadden.

"Come, come, Sarah! I see you have had a little tiff with your mother; but why this affectation of persisting in speaking of her as *Mistress Burnett*?"

"Why," cried Sarah, in a choking voice, "why—*because Mistress Burnett is not my mother.*"

"Impossible! My dear child, do you know what you are saying? It is nonsense!"

"Nonsensical and impossible as it may seem, it is the truth," she retorted firmly. "For twenty-one years, that is to say, since the date of my birth, this woman has played the most marvellous, cunning, and treacherous part it is possible for a woman to play; all for the advantage of her own daughter—for she has a daughter—and to my detriment."

Mr. Hadden was silent, for in this strange declaration he saw the faint shadow of the murdered woman.

"Ah, you may well say it is impossible," she went on excitedly; "for who could believe that she could have been the infamous creature she is? Who could have believed that from the moment when she first took me on her knee she has deceived me with hypocritical affection, kissed me with the kiss of Judas? And I loved her, never wearied of doing a daughter's work for her, never complained of any sacrifice I had to make for her comfort; while she was blinding me with her false love, robbing me of my name and fortune to bestow them on her own child. Oh, it was cruel—it was baseness beyond credence!"

She had opened the deed-box, and with agitated fingers had drawn from it a number of letters. One of these she unfolded and gave to

him. He rose to his feet hastily, adjusting his glasses, and stooping over the epistle.

She, with hands clasped and pressed on the table, bent forward with a strange, eager look while he read.

The letters had all a yellowish tinge, as if with age; the one in Mr. Hadden's hand had less of this hue than the others. The penmanship was of a bold, running character, and this was what it contained:

"Glasgow, 2d October, 1851.

"Jean Gorbai refuses to give up the letters. I can do nothing further. I try to forgive you. Farewell."

And then came the bare initials, "R. C.," and there was nothing more.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ASTOUNDING REVELATION.

MR. HADDEN perused the singular letter several times, uttering at each perusal a short, quick "Ah!" of amaze and curiosity. Then he deliberately refolded the letter, and returned it to Sarah. Without a word he reseated himself, crossed his hands on the handle of his umbrella, leaned his chin on them, and gazed inquiringly at the dark young face opposite, which had been watching him with so much intentness.

Sarah had not moved from her position. Pallid, cold, and with rigid features, she had remained until the moment he returned the paper. She took it and placed it on the table under her hand, and at that moment her big dark eyes flashed upon his face with unusual brilliance; then the long black lashes drooped over the eyes, and she waited for him to speak.

"This is a grave affair," he said presently, "a very grave affair, Sarah; and it is not clear to me yet what it all means. A woman, to be what you represent your mother—I mean Mrs. Burnett—to be, must have possessed a degree of boldness and callousness rarely found in one of her sex. She must have had assistance; her husband must have been in the plot, and—"

"Her husband!" interrupted Sarah, with a movement of impatience. "Ah, there is the sting! in these two words rests the whole secret of my wrong and her infamy."

In all this Hadden began to realize something of the theory he had formed regarding the motive for the destruction of the woman Gorbai, and he was impatient to have the whole matter before him, that he might be able to see how near he had approached the truth.

"Let us keep to the point, Sarah. You desire my advice; then first let me understand clearly the position, the circumstances under which my counsel may be serviceable. Of this strange declaration you have made—a declaration which, I confess, at first seems to me bewildering—what proof have you? How and when did you find it?"

Sarah had bent down on one knee on the floor beside the deed-box, and was methodically arranging a number of the letters in her hand.

"It is now fifteen days since the matter came to my knowledge by accident; the same accident placed me in possession of such proofs as I hold of the truth of what I have said to you. Of moral proof I have enough; but of actual proof I have not enough. Yet one word from Jean Gorbai would have placed my case beyond doubt, and she would have spoken it if she had only lived. But she has been murdered, and my proof falls to the ground, for she cannot speak the word that would have saved me."

"Would she have spoken it?"

"Yes, gladly, for she was fond of me. She loved me, and bitterly repented the wrong she had done me."

"Umph! Now explain the nature of the wrong."

"The explanation is contained in these letters; but, to save time, I will tell you as connectedly and briefly as I can, and you may examine the letters in their order as I proceed. The one I have given you is the last, but it is one of the most important, as you will see."

"Proceed."

"It is a story that I blush to be compelled to speak of. I could not tell it were you not so old a friend, and my need for help so great."

"Good lass, no shame can attach to you for a deed to which you had no power to offer resistance."

"Thanks; would that I could feel so! As I have told you, I made this discovery by accident. Fifteen days ago I had occasion to be searching for an old book which had gone a-missing. My good or ill fortune caused me to open a trunk which had been lying in the garret untouched for years. One of the keys among my set fitted the lock, and I opened it. There was nothing inside save a quantity of old newspapers, which were padded round the sides of this deed-box. I saw at once that the thing I sought could not be there; yet the fiend of curiosity had seized me; the key was in the deed-box, and I opened it. These letters lay before me. I cannot tell you how strangely I felt as I gazed at them; but I can understand now that it was an instinctive presentiment of evil which warned me to stay my hand—to search no farther. But I was im-

pelled by some stronger power to search, and learn what those letters were about. I searched—”

“And you were punished.”

“Most cruelly. I took up the first packet, which was tied with this bit of blue silk ribbon, and I suspected at once that they were old love-letters. I opened one, and looked at the writing. Some instinct again warned me not to read; but curiosity impelled me, and I read. The first few lines were sufficient to show me that they were written by my father. I was interested, and anxious to learn something of one who was so near to me, and whom I had never known. Then—”

She stopped, closed her lips tightly, and set her teeth; a momentary spasm moved her features, and they were placid again. The letters rustled in her hands as she proceeded to untie the packets.

“Then”—she went on more composedly, but in a low tone, that quivered now and again with the emotion she controlled only by the most violent effort of self-command—“then the first letter quickened me to the perception that there had been evil work done, and I read on without pause to the end of the last. This was what I learned: Mr. Robert Cargill—”

“What! of Mavisbank House?”

“Yes, he—the millionaire, the cotton lord, the man who stands as one of the chiefs of our city’s commerce—he is my father, and he planned and effected the scheme by which I have been robbed and made a creature of shame.”

“Umph! another item in support of my theory,” muttered Hadden.

Sarah either did not heed or did not hear.

“One minute, and I will be able to lay bare the secret,” she said, with a suffocating accent. “It is not easy for me to speak of this, even when I have resolved to do so, and when I know that it must be done.”

She bowed her head, and her form moved as if she were sobbing, although she uttered no sound. When she looked up, the face seemed to have become paler and harder than before.

“The letter I have marked with the figure 1,” she began at length, “is the earliest of the series, and forms the key-note to all that follows. You can examine the letters in their order as I hand them to you. This is the story:

“Robert Cargill, the only son of the head of the great firm of Cargill & Co., the manufacturers, had formed an attachment to Sarah Burnett, who was at that time governess in a family near Edinburgh. She was an orphan, handsome and ambitious.

“The family in which she had found an indulgent home was that of Mr. Douglas, of Bourtrie Hall. The family consisted of Mr.

Douglas and his daughter Katherine, to whom Sarah Burnett was a kind of companion as well as governess. Mr. Douglas's wife being dead, and his own health being delicate, he was eager to see his daughter settled in life by marriage with some worthy gentleman. As she had a dowry of a hundred thousand pounds, there were suitors in plenty for his daughter's hand.

"Among these suitors was Mr. Robert Cargill. But it appears that this gentleman was a suitor against his will, for he had already formed a passionate affection for the governess. This, however, he concealed from his father, and from Mr. Douglas; and while falsely playing the lover to Katherine, he was in reality courting the governess."

"What date was that?" asked Mr. Hadden.

"According to this letter, it was in 1842.

"At length a marriage was arranged, and Mr. Douglas agreed to pay down, in full, his daughter's dowry on the day of the ceremony. Six days before the marriage took place Sarah Burnett quitted Bourtrie Hall, without having given any previous intimation of her intention to do so, and without leaving any hint of her destination.

"The marriage took place as arranged, the hundred thousand pounds were handed to the bridegroom, and the great firm of Cargill & Co. was saved from bankruptcy."

"Eh, what?" exclaimed Mr. Hadden, quickly.

"You can see the position: Mr. Cargill, senior, with the reputation and credit of a millionaire, was in fact a bankrupt, and to save their firm from disgrace, and themselves from beggary, the son agreed to marry the innocent and unsuspecting lady he had deceived into the belief that he loved her, in order that he might obtain possession of her fortune.

"The letter which I have here, marked No. 2, carries the miserable scheme a step farther. Eight days after his marriage Robert Cargill left his young wife in Mavisbank House, and went to Liverpool—on business, he stated. There he met Sarah Burnett, as had been previously arranged. They went through some mockery of a ceremony; and in all these letters, except the last, he calls Sarah his wife. He inveighs against his father for having forced him into a marriage, to suit the convenience of his business, with a creature he had grown to detest, and whom he could never look at without a wicked desire for her death."

Sarah paused here, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

"My poor mother!" she sobbed, and her tone was full of bitterness.

Mr. Hadden breathed quickly and fidgeted uncomfortably in his chair, repeatedly raising his glasses to his nose and dropping them

again. The affair was beginning to take form, and it was a form that astounded even him.

Sarah resumed with forced calmness:

"I need not waste time or trouble you at present by referring to the endless meannesses and falsehoods to which this man stooped to blind the unhappy wife whose fortune saved his house from ruin—whose trust and devotion he requited by indifference, and an act of villainy so bad that, holding the proofs in my hand, I could not believe at first that such things could be. I need not trouble you with the details of all this; you can guess what they must have been when you understand how little he valued his good, simple wife, and how much he was prepared to sacrifice for the sake of the scheming woman who now passed as *Mistress Burnett*."

A warm flush of indignation lit her pale face like the reflection of fire, and subsided.

Mr. Hadden muttered "Umph!" and she proceeded:

"The letter I have marked No. 4—I have given you No. 3?"

"Yes, it is here."

"No. 4, then, suggests the plot which was afterwards carried out. The woman Burnett appears to have had a little conscience, a little memory of the kindness she had experienced at the hands of Katherine Cargill when they were together at Bourtrie Hall, or she dreaded the possible consequences of the crime. At any rate, she appears to have objected to the proposition—feebly and cunningly, no doubt, with some view to relieve herself of any responsibility in the matter—for letter 5 is occupied with arguments persuading her to compliance."

"But the nature of the plot—what was it?" inquired Mr. Hadden, eager to have the theory his busy brain had already formed confirmed or disproved.

Sarah faltered with a momentary shyness as she responded:

"It was in the spring of 1844 that Mrs. Cargill and Sarah Burnett were about to become mothers."

"Ah—that is it!"

"This letter, No. 6, gives the whole arrangement of the scheme. You must read it."

The good man took the faded piece of paper she handed to him, adjusted his glasses, disposed himself so that the light might fall on the writing, and read thus:

"Morley's Hotel, London, 28th March, 1844.

"MY OWN SARAH,—We have arrived here so far safe and well. K. C., as I expected, complained peevishly of my stubbornness in persisting on this journey at the present time. She has been in her room all day, fretting over it. Let her stay there: I hate her whining ways.

“Your letter reached me, and you cannot know how much pleasure, how much delight, your consent has given me. You cannot know what joy I feel in the thought that your child—‘our’ child—will possess the position and advantages which my love for you makes me eager to bestow. Ay, that love makes me ready to dare any risk, to brave any venture, for the sake of our child’s future.

“Now attend to these instructions carefully, for upon your exact fulfilment of them depends everything. Any forgetfulness or slip on your part will destroy the result of all that I have arranged with so much difficulty and anxiety.

“First, then, you must start for London the moment you receive this. A cab will be waiting for you on your arrival, and in the cab will be the nurse—a woman named Gorbai. She is the wife of a sailor, who comes from Greenock. She is a discreet woman, and so devoted to my interests that she will do anything for me. She is quite safe, because, setting aside whatever gratitude she may entertain towards me for having rescued her from the workhouse, she knows that she is wholly dependent on me.

“Say nothing, however, to her, for I have led her to believe that you are ignorant of what is to happen. She will bring you here to Morley’s Hotel, where I have caused chambers to be reserved for you. I will take care that, when the proper moment arrives, K. C.’s nurse shall be out of the way. Then the woman Gorbai and Dr. Largie, who is an old friend of mine, willing to serve me, will contrive in the confusion to exchange the children.

“I know that your kind heart will be as careful of the child intrusted to you as if it were your own. I know this, or I should never risk so much to place the child of the woman I love in the position of heir to a millionaire. I will take care that the other child wants for nothing.

“Be discreet and bold, and the result will justify all this trouble.

“Ever your own,

ROBERT CARGILL.”

Mr. Hadden pressed his forefinger on his temple and leaned forward, staring at the floor, trying to bring the ends of this strange story to meet the theory he had formed relative to the death of the woman Jean Gorbai. The antecedents of that unfortunate creature were, at any rate, clear. The chief point that remained to be settled now was whether or not the proposed exchange had been effected.

He put the question, and Sarah answered by presenting to him a letter numbered 7, in which Robert Cargill, five years after the date of letter 6, angrily upbraided Mrs. Burnett with having been false to him, and bitterly complaining that, after all he had done and risked for her sake, she had proved unworthy of his love. He

agreed to make her an allowance of two hundred and fifty pounds a year, but he would never see her again.

Then came the last letter, dated 2d October, 1851, which Mr. Hadden had read first, and which plainly indicated that there had been some trouble with Jean Gorbal, and that an effort had been made to obtain from her whatever indiscreet letters might have been written by Mr. Cargill or Mrs. Burnett. But the attempt had failed, and the woman kept her hold firm upon the guilty merchant prince and his unhappy and now discarded accomplice.

"That closes the correspondence," said Sarah, huskily. "You understand that K. C. stands for Katherine Cargill, who died in 1852, holding in her hand that of the girl she supposed to be her own daughter—the hand of the girl who has usurped my place and robbed me of my name and fortune, and my mother's love."

"It was singular that the fates should have aided the conspiracy, as it would seem, by presenting children of the same sex," muttered the detective, abstractedly.

"Yes," commented Sarah, dryly, as she began to gather up the letters, and methodically proceeded to re-arrange them.

"You have nothing more than what you have shown me?"

"No ; but the proof morally is, I think, complete."

"Ay, but the proof positive is deficient."

Sarah turned upon him a quick, searching glance.

"Suppose that there can be no further proof than this I have shown you, tell me what is your opinion of the case?"

"To me," answered the good man, slowly, "you are no more the daughter of Mrs. Burnett than I am, but others may not think so."

"You are right, Mr. Hadden, and I recognized the difficulty at once. I went to Jean Gorbal. She had nursed me—she loved me. She had been tormented night and day by the memory of the crime she had committed. Her conscience was tortured every time she looked at me, the child she had betrayed. She confessed all the moment she saw that I suspected the truth. The scheme of Mr. Cargill, so cunningly conceived, had been as cunningly carried into effect, and to the day of her death my poor mother had never once suspected the trick that had been put upon her. The fortunate circumstance of the children being of the same sex removed the only serious difficulty which the conspirators were powerless to control, and the exchange took place exactly as arranged."

"It is monstrous !"

"Jean Gorbal freely promised to give her testimony in my favor whenever I should stand forth to claim my rights."

"And she is dead, carrying your proof with her to the grave," muttered the old man, regretfully.

"Perhaps ; but I have one hope still left—the letters written by my father, which she possessed. She had preserved them to the last. She showed them to me, and they confirmed simply all that I had learned from the letters I hold in my hand. She would have given them to me on the spot, but I was confused and stupefied by the discovery I had made. I thought that, since she had kept them so long safely, she had better keep them still, until I had resolved upon the course I should adopt. The letters were most explicit, and their production would be decisive. I had them in my hands. I read them, and I hope that they will be found yet among poor Jean's things."

"There is no hope of that," mentally observed the detective. The ashes of those letters had been found in the grate of the front room in Jean's cottage, and it was beyond a doubt that the murder had been committed in order to obtain and destroy them.

But by whom—by whom? That question remained unsettled yet.

"It would seem, then," he said thoughtfully, "that Mr. Cargill did not keep the promise he had made of providing for you comfortably?"

"He did not provide for me at all, except by making the allowance to Mrs. Burnett."

"What! Why, that is the most infamous part of it all, and the basest."

"Don't blame my father!" she cried quickly, interrupting him, and raising her hand. "I am able to comprehend something of his character from what I have heard about him, and what I have read of him. He was proud and stubborn: he fancied that he had been deceived by Mrs. Burnett, for whom he seems to have felt the warmest attachment up to the last. He was enraged with her, and in his rage overlooked me."

"Umph! I should call that selfish and unpardonable neglect. However, that note dated October, 1851, is the most important you have got, so far as your identification as his legitimate child is concerned; for why should he be so anxious to obtain the letters from Jean Gorbai, if he did not fear the revelation of the crime he had committed?"

"That is how I have regarded it."

"Have you made known your discovery to Mrs. Burnett? and what did she say?"

"Yes, I told her everything. What did she say? What could she say, or what was a woman of her peevish and selfish disposition likely to say? She went into hysterics, accused me of ingratitude and callousness, asserted that I had gone mad, and that the discovery I was making such a fuss about was untrue, and worth nothing in a court of law."

"Ah, but she did think of the law; that confirms your belief in the importance of the letters. But there is one thing more I want to know. During the fifteen years Mrs. Burnett has been living in Glasgow has she never made any attempt to see Mr. Cargill?"

"Frequently she made the attempt. This packet, which I have not opened, contains letters of hers, which she wrote to him, praying for an interview, and trying to explain her conduct. He seems to be a man of inflexible mind, once he has determined on a thing; and he returned the letters to her without reading them."

The interview was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" said Sarah, sharply.

"If you please, miss, the mistress is calling for you awful, and will no be quiet till you come."

Sarah hesitated.

"Go, my lass," said Mr. Hadden, gently. "You need not make the wound you must inflict deeper than is necessary."

Sarah quitted the room with a dark, relentless expression, as if she submitted to his counsel against her will.

"Poor lass—poor lass!" he muttered to himself; "it is a miserable position for one so young and good to be placed in; it is enough almost to upset every better feeling of her nature. She does not even suspect from what quarter the blow has come that breaks down her proofs and seems to render them useless. But I see, and that blow which killed Jean Gorbal shall be the convincing proof of Sarah's rights. Yes, for that blow Robert Cargill, Esq., or—ugh! abominable thought!—the girl who occupies Sarah's position as his daughter is responsible. How? Umph! we shall see. I may take one of these letters for twenty-four hours, so as to compare the writing, and satisfy myself they are the incontestable productions of the millionaire of Mavisbank House."

CHAPTER V.

SARAH'S DIARY.

MR. HADDEN had scarcely closed the pocketbook in which he had placed the letter he had taken from the heap on the table before Sarah returned.

Nothing in her expression afforded the slightest indication of what had taken place between her and Mrs. Burnett. She was cold, calm, and firm. She was a woman evidently capable of ambitious thoughts, and strong enough in resolve to carry them to an issue, young as she was in years.

"Well," queried the old man, briskly, "how is Mrs. Burnett? Better, I hope."

"She is worse. Her brain is greatly affected, and she is delirious. In her ravings she accuses me of every atrocity and cruelty it is in the power of man or woman to perpetrate."

"You will, at any rate, send for the doctor now?"

"I have just sent for him."

She seated herself at the table, and began carefully to replace the letters in the deed-box, without observing the absence of the one her friend had borrowed, and apparently without any immediate intention of resuming the conversation; or, it might be, as if she reserved further speech till he had pronounced an opinion.

After watching her for several minutes Mr. Hadden spoke, reflectively :

"The more I think of this matter, Sarah, the more astounding it seems, and the greater difficulty I see in advising you how to proceed. Did not Mrs. Burnett make some effort to exculpate herself?"

"Of course, as I have told you, she tried to explain the correspondence as having no reference to me. She— Oh, but why repeat the feeble falsehoods by which a woman strove to cloak the sin which was defenceless, and to screen the shame that was so palpable?"

"And she adheres to that denial?"

"Yes," and Sarah shrugged her shoulders slightly as she made the reply ; "and it is that which adds to my vexation with her, that she will persist in the lie, when she knows it is useless in the teeth of all this proof. My first thought was that she loved me ; that I would burn the letters, and hide my discovery in my own heart forever. But now I know how base she is—how little she cares for me, provided her own child is free from disgrace; and I will not be a party to this great fraud."

"You are right, my child; it would be wrong to permit the fraud to be perpetuated by your silence."

"I wish you knew enough of the law to guide me. I—I feel almost unable to explain this to Mr. Hewitt, and I fear that I must do it."

"I confess, Sarah," said Hadden, chuckling inwardly with the consciousness of how much more power he had than she suspected, "I confess that I am somewhat at a loss to help you, but I will do my best, and we must be guided to some extent by circumstances. Mrs. Burnett has, doubtless, sent notice of your discovery to Mr. Cargill?"

"No doubt; but even if she has it will be of little service to her at present, for Mr. Cargill is in London."

“How do you know that?”

“I wished to see my father, and I went to Mavisbank House.”

“You did?—when?”

“I told you that I was enraged by her persistence in the lie, and having determined to claim my rights, you do not suppose that I would remain quietly in the house, biting my nails? I went to the house, and, as I considered the visit of importance, I wrote down all that occurred in my diary. Here is the place; you had better read it now.”

The book had been lying on the table, as she had taken it out of the deed-box with the letters, and she now placed it, open, in Mr. Hadden’s hand.

This was the entry she referred to :

“*Tuesday, 9th April.*—At last, after a week of anguish such as I pray Heaven I may never have to endure again, I was able to carry out my determination to visit Mavisbank House. Only last night I determined on this course, which has been tormenting my mind for the past week. It was so hard to decide—so hard to present myself at the great house of my father, with the probability of being turned from the door as an impostor—it was so hard to take this step, which finally separates me from the woman I have so long regarded as my mother.

“At length I have done it. I walked to Partick to-day, and by saying to the porter at the lodge of Mavisbank that I had important business at the house, I was permitted to pass up the avenue unquestioned. It is a grand house—a grand place—and the very atmosphere seems to tell that one is in the precincts of a millionaire’s mansion. My heart rose to my throat, and fluttered, and seemed to be choking me. I wanted to turn back, and run from the place; but I had a duty to my dear dead mother to perform, and I went on, casting the trembling fears of the coward from me.

“I went up to the principal door and rang the bell. A footman opened it for me, and stared as if he thought me an impertinent hussy for attempting to obtain admission by that entrance; for I saw that he took me for a relation of one of the servants, or a milliner or dressmaker. The blood rushed to my face under the man’s stare, and I felt my pulse quicken with a sort of indignation. Never till that moment had I experienced such a wild longing for wealth and power, simply that I might be able to punish this fellow for his insolence to one he thought poor, and therefore weak.

“It was a simple occurrence, and a common one; but, on reflection, I am disposed to be grateful to the footman, for it was his rudeness that stirred my temper, and gave me strength and courage to carry out the object of my visit. I asked for Mr. Cargill.

“ ‘Not at home,’ said the man ; and he seemed to be on the point of closing the door in my face. But I advanced a step into the hall, and prevented him.

“ ‘Is Miss Cargill at home?’ I asked.

“ ‘Yes; but she can’t see you unless you’ve come by appointment.’

“ ‘I advanced another step into the hall.

“ ‘I have not come by appointment, but I have come in reference to a matter of the utmost importance to Mr. Cargill and his daughter. If you refuse to acquaint her that I am here, I will wait till your master returns.’

“ ‘Then you’ll wait a few days,’ said the fellow, grinning, ‘for he’s in London.’

“ ‘There is all the more necessity why I should see your mistress. Refuse to give her my message at your peril.’

“ ‘I suppose the man saw in my face and my way of speaking that I was in earnest, that my threat was not quite an empty one, and that I was not a beggar for myself or some charity. At any rate, he rang a bell, and told another footman who answered it to tell Miss Easton that ‘a person wanted to see her mistress particular.’

“ ‘Miss Easton—or Easton, as I afterwards heard her called—is ‘my lady’s maid.’ She is a saucy, sharp woman of about thirty years of age. She at first refused to take my message, as she had never heard my name before, and knew that her mistress had no acquaintance with me.

“ ‘By stubbornly insisting upon my object, I at length prevailed upon the woman to go to her mistress. She was all the more disinclined to oblige me because I would not give her the slightest information as to the nature of my important business. After waiting in the hall for about half an hour, Easton returned and said that the lady had condescended—*condescended* to me !—to see me ; and holding her head disdainfully high, she conducted me up a magnificent staircase, along a broad, splendid corridor, and into my lady’s boudoir. All these petty annoyances had been heating my blood, and I entered the room full of rage and utterly relentless.

“ ‘It was a splendid apartment, tastefully arranged, and luxuriant to a degree. Compared to it, the rooms of my home seemed poverty-stricken. This did not help to soothe my temper, but rather added to the fire. I was, however, struck by the appearance of the occupant of this chamber, whom I had found so much difficulty in reaching, and was for a few minutes silent in her presence.

“ ‘She is, of course, of my own age—twenty-one; but she looks younger, for she has had none of the responsibilities to bear I have had. She is very fair, rather little, delicate and graceful in her figure. Her features are of that soft, rounded kind one sees in pictures of blondes, singularly regular, smooth and clear in complexion.

The hair is bright as a band of sun-rays, and the face is lit by two large, pensive blue eyes.

“Even to me—the woman whose place she has so long usurped—Katie Cargill, or, more properly, Katherine Burnett, is very beautiful. Her manner, too, is gentle, soft, and kind, forming a singular contrast to the arrogance of the servants around her.

“My heart yearns to her: I feel that if I had met her under any other circumstances I would have loved her—I would have become devoted to her as to a cherished sister.

“Again the thought occurred to me, Why should I rise like an evil genius to disturb the clear current of this innocent girl’s life? Why should I rise to render my father’s declining years miserable?—for I felt that she must be very dear to him.

“Then came the memory of my poor mother, so deceived, so wronged, whose trust and love had been so brutally abused, and my heart became stern and morose, and the duty I had to do became imperative.

“I bowed, and said with as much calmness as possible:

“‘You do not know me, Miss Cargill; but that is of no importance, as I think you will see when I tell you that the purpose which brings me here affects your own and your father’s honor closely.’

“I suppose she did not believe me, or did not understand me, for she raised her softly pencilled eyebrows slightly, and smiled. She had never before heard a breath against the honor of her name, and I suppose the seriousness with which I suggested that such a thing was possible amused her.

“‘Will you sit down?’ she said, in a kind, gentle voice, which I was constrained to obey, although I had intended to remain standing.

“‘And now,’ she went on, ‘is this business very important, and will it take a long time to tell me?’

“‘I am afraid, Miss Cargill, it will occupy you more than an hour.’

“A shade of disappointment crossed her brow.

“‘And *must* you tell it to me? Could you not wait until papa comes home?’

“‘I think the sooner you know the position in which my business places you it will be the better for you and another person concerned.’

“She looked at me with a quick, penetrating glance, which showed that, gentle as she seemed, she had a fiery spirit when occasion roused it.

“‘You are very earnest,’ she said, ‘and if it will relieve you, why, I must miss my morning ride for once. Excuse me a minute.’

“She went to a pretty enamelled escritoire and wrote a brief note.

Then she rang the bell, and Easton entered, honoring me with an impudent glance.

“‘When Mr. Tavendale calls, give him this, Easton, if you please.’”

“Easton took the note and quitted the room.

“‘Now, I am completely at your service for the next hour,’ she said, seating herself in an easy-chair by the fire.

“A little French poodle leaped into her lap, and she fondled it with the playfulness of a child, conscious of no trouble or thought of the future. I could not help thinking, as I looked at her, how often the greatest misfortunes of one’s life befall us when we feel most secure, and are therefore least prepared to meet them.

“‘I am sorry, Miss Cargill,’ I said, resolved not to waste time, but to proceed at once to the core of the revelation, ‘that the business I have to speak about is of a most painful kind. Believe me, it is not you alone that will suffer for the faults of others. I beseech you to try to be calm, and at least to make an effort to read these letters before you take any violent step.’”

“‘Violent step!’ she exclaimed, laughing; ‘why, one would think you were going to tell me of some awful tragedy. What can it be that makes you speak so solemnly and look so grave?’”

“‘You will find it hard to believe what I have got to show you, but the upshot of it all is that you are not the legitimate daughter of Mr. Cargill.’”

“She started, and a look of surprise and indignation flashed across her face.

“‘Read these before you speak,’ I said, laying the principal letters on a small table beside her, and not giving her time to say a word.

“She hesitated a moment, as if inclined to pitch the letters back to me, and have me turned from the house as an impudent impostor; but she altered her mind, took up one of the letters, and uttered a cry of amaze and fright, I thought, as she recognized her father’s penmanship. She turned her head away for a moment, and then began to read.

“I handed the letters to her one by one in their order. Without a word, she read on, and I watched her narrowly all the time. I have never seen such a sight, and I hope I may never see such another. At the end of the second letter her fair, fresh face had changed to a ghastly pallor; at the end of the fourth, the pallor had deepened to that sallow hue which the face of a corpse assumes a little while after death. She had taken her handkerchief from her pocket, and occasionally she raised it, with a trembling hand, to her lips and brow, to wipe off the clammy moisture which gathered on them; and her cheeks were white as the handkerchief.

“Without a word, she read to the end; without a word, she gave me back the last of the fatal letters. There was no exclamation, no

sigh, no gesture, to relieve the agony she suffered. The poodle fell from her lap, and she did not seem to know it. The stillness of her anguish was terrible, and at one moment I felt an impulse to throw the letters into the fire, clasp the beautiful girl in my arms, and cry to her,

“ ‘We are sisters : let us forget : let each remain in her place as before.’

“ ‘But that enthusiastic impulse was checked by the suggestion, If the letters are burned, is it likely that she will afterwards recognize me as a sister? No; the letters must be preserved for my dead mother’s sake.

“ ‘She remained in that silent, stupefied state for half an hour, and then she slowly rose to her feet ; but she leaned heavily on the back of the chair. The girl had been transformed to a woman, aged in sad experience. She spoke in a voice so low and trembling that I could scarcely hear her.

“ ‘ ‘From all that I have read there,’ she said, ‘I am led to the belief that I am not the daughter of Mrs. Cargill; but have you no other proofs than these—I mean proofs that could render my belief a certainty?’

“ ‘ ‘Dr. Largie can speak.’

“ ‘ ‘He died five years ago.’

“ ‘ ‘Then there is the nurse, Jean Gorbal, who lives in Port-Dundas; her testimony will suffice.’

“ ‘She did not speak for a little while: something in the name seemed to have suggested an important thought. At length her eyes brightened.

“ ‘ ‘Yes, I remember,’ she said; ‘I remember hearing the name, and it was in connection with a large sum of money my father had to pay unwillingly.’

“ ‘ ‘That is another item in the proof,’ I said.

“ ‘ ‘Yes. Do you know the lady who is, by this account, my father’s legitimate daughter?’

“ ‘ ‘Yes: you see her in me.’

“ ‘She took my hands affectionately, and kissed me.

“ ‘ ‘Sister, in any case I am glad that I have found you;’ and she wept, resting her brow on my shoulder.

“ ‘I could not speak. With what words could I attempt to console her? She seemed to guess my difficulty, and by and by spoke herself.

“ ‘ ‘I want you to give me nine days, sister, before you proceed any farther. On the ninth day my father—our father—will arrive from London, and then I will be prepared to act. Do not fear or doubt; I will guard your interests as faithfully as my own. You take me from a high position: perhaps you will separate me from—from the

man I love, and whose wife I should have been in a little time, had not this happened; but, in return, you give me a mother to cherish and aid in her age; and, above all, you enable me to help in the atonement for a great crime.'

"I promised to comply with her request, and left her."

That ended the statement of the diary, and, after closing the book, Mr. Hadden laid it down with the impression that it advanced one step nearer to the solution of the mystery.

"And now," he said, "I suppose you await the return of Mr. Cargill from London?"

"Yes; to-morrow is the day. And to-morrow I mean to ask Mr. Hewitt to find out what papers the constables found in the house of Jean Gorbai."

"Very good, and to-morrow I shall be able to give you the result of my night's reflections. It would be useless for me to offer my advice just now: the affair demands careful and earnest thought. My poor child, you have much to suffer yet."

"Ay, and it is hard to bear this, joined to petty annoyances about money."

"Money! My dear Sarah, why have you not told me that before? Here, I will lend you a small sum, for which I shall exact a heavy interest—say a hundred per cent. Now don't say a word, unless you want to vex me; but put it in your pocket, and be a good girl. Good-night."

While he had been speaking he had dived into the pocket of his coat, produced a check-book, and written an order for fifty pounds. Then, dreading to hear any expressions of gratitude, he hurried out of the house.

Sarah stood with the check in her hand till she heard the outer door close behind him. Then she slowly folded up the valuable bit of paper, and proceeded to lock up diary and letters in the deed-box, which she carried up-stairs to her bedroom.

CHAPTER VI.

KATIE CARGILL'S SECRET.

EARLY on the following morning (the 18th) Mr. Lyon rode leisurely out to Mavisbank. It had been his custom to take this ride very frequently of late; and he always went away with head bent and brow contracted in thought, and generally returned with face brightened and head erect, as if the exercise agreed with him amazingly.

His groom, however, who occasionally accompanied him on these journeys, attributed his master's healthful appearance on his return rather to the sunshine of Miss Cargill's beauty than to the effects of the exercise.

That there was some truth in the groom's theory was apparent, from the fact that on the mornings when Mr. Lyon failed to meet the lady, or failed to see her at the house, he returned without the bright look. In that condition he had returned for the last eight mornings, and his servants, who, of course, knew as much of his wooing as he did himself, nodded their heads and agreed that the master had not seen his lady. So far they were right. Mr. Lyon had not encountered Miss Cargill for the past eight mornings; and at the house he had been informed that she was slightly indisposed, and could not receive anybody.

Consequently on this, the ninth morning, he started with a graver face than usual. He passed by Partick Church, and on approaching the entrance of Mavisbank his eight disappointments were forgotten in the delight of seeing Miss Cargill riding slowly along, followed at a distance by her groom.

He joined her immediately, and together they rode towards Kilpatrick, he eagerly scanning her face to note to what extent she had suffered from the indisposition which had been the explanation he had received of her inability to see him, and congratulating her earnestly on her recovery.

The pallor of the beautiful girl's face indicated that she had suffered much more from the indisposition of the past eight days than Mr. Lyon had expected. He had understood, from the answers he had received at the house to his daily inquiry, that she had been attacked by some slight cold or other trifling ailment which was in no respect of a serious character. He saw now that her illness had not only been serious, but had been even dangerous; at any rate, he leaped to that conclusion, and he was troubled proportionately by his own imaginings of what the delicate creature must have endured. He was perplexed, too, by the odd way in which she evaded every question as to the nature of her ailment.

She laughed gently at his grave looks and earnest questions, assured him that she had suffered nothing save a slight headache—that, in short, her illness was not worth speaking about.

But even while she was saying this, and while the smile was still lingering about her lips, a shade passed over her brow and darkened her eyes. It seemed as if the matter were of the gravest import, and she desired to conceal the fact that it was so. When he suggested this, she laughed, but the laugh was not the clear, musical sound he delighted to hear; it was sharp and hysterical to some extent.

Apparently conscious of this herself, she touched her horse with her dainty, gold-mounted whip, and attempted to conceal her agitation by setting off at a canter. Mr. Lyon accommodated the pace of his horse to that of the lady's, and they turned in the direction of the house.

Mr. Lyon did not attempt to speak again until Miss Cargill slackened rein. The exercise had flushed her, and, as she turned her face to him, smiling, she looked more like the Katie of a fortnight ago, than she had done during the last half-hour. His perception of this only served to suggest to him that her indisposition had been, and was, mental, not bodily. A twinge of pain shot through him as he thought of the probable cause—love; for, in his condition, he could associate her with nothing but the tender passion, and innumerable rivals to himself.

“Do you know papa is to be home this evening?” she said carelessly.

“I am glad of that, for I am anxious to speak to him on a subject of some interest to you and to myself—or, rather, I should say, to renew the subject of a conversation I once had with Mr. Cargill.”

He was getting a little confused, and he gripped the reins so tightly that there was a chance of the horse going backward instead of forward.

Katie regarded him with a quick, scared look, as if she dreaded that he had discovered some secret.

“Of interest to me?” she said, hesitatingly.

“Yes, of much interest to you, and— But are you ill, Miss Cargill?”

“No, not at all—do not mind me. I am a little weak—that is all. We will turn into the park, if you please.”

She made the proposition with so much abruptness that Mr. Lyon, in his surprise, forgot his own confusion. He had expected her to ride on to the lodge, and her sudden preference to enter by the small side gate of the park struck him, as if she were afraid of any stray passenger catching anything of their conversation.

At a motion of her whip the groom rode up, and opened the gate. Mr. Lyon and the lady passed through, and the groom respectfully fell behind again.

The stately oaks, elms, and beeches shook their branches to the sharp breath of the wind; the birds sustained a merry concert; and, with the lowing of cattle, and the voice of a distant laborer occasionally shouting to a comrade—these were the only sounds which broke the pastoral quietude of the place. Everywhere the lordly demesne proclaimed the power and wealth of its master. The carefully trimmed hedges and borders; the fat, lazy kine and the sleek horses grazing in the paddock; the very grass, in the richness of its

verdure—everything seemed to bear on its front the golden stamp of the millionaire proprietor.

And yet here was the future mistress of all—young, beautiful, apparently having every means of happiness at her back—pallid and affrighted at the suspicion of the discovery of the great sin which was oppressing her young life.

Mr. Lyon did not observe this with sufficient minuteness to form any opinion regarding it, further than that something unusual had occurred to annoy her. He did not rest for more than a second even upon that, for he was busy trying to arrange the best way of expressing a declaration and question which had often been on the point of his tongue before, and as often postponed. He was determined that there should be no more delay, and he was unexpectedly helped towards his purpose.

“You were saying,” she observed presently, with an assumption of indifference which was too transparent to hide the real importance she attached to the answer—“you were saying that you intended to speak to papa about something of interest to me as well as yourself, Mr. Lyon?”

“Yes, it concerns you nearly, and, indeed, it rests with you whether or not I shall speak of it again.”

“With me?”

“With you; for, in fact—that is, in brief—”

He paused, and looked at her with a half-sad smile at his own awkwardness.

“I am afraid,” he said, in a low, earnest tone, “that I would make a bad advocate, however poor a judge I may be. But I have had no experience in—in this sort of thing. I express myself badly; suppose I try to speak not for myself, but another—say, a friend of mine. Well, this friend, Miss Cargill, has known you for several years, and is regarded by your father as, in some respects, an intimate friend. He has observed you closely, endeavored to read your mind, and to understand your heart.”

He made another pause, as if half expecting her to speak; but she remained silent, her lips closed, and her eyes widened slightly in surprise.

“In one word, Katie,” he said, with a tender earnestness which raised him beyond the hesitation of the lover in a first confession of his passion, “I believe that I could make you happy, as I *know* that you would make me happy, if you would become my wife.”

“Your wife, Mr. Lyon!”

She seemed for an instant relieved from the burden of her fright, but presently her head was bowed forward on her breast, and he, bending to observe her anxiously, saw that tears were forcing their way from her eyes down her cheeks.

"My dear Miss Cargill, have I said anything to offend you or pain you?" he exclaimed, in a startled voice. "I am so awkward. Heaven knows my love is too sincere ever to have been uttered, if I had guessed that its utterance would have pained you."

"Oh, I am miserable, miserable!" the poor girl sobbed, and the tears, no longer restrained, glistened down her pale cheeks.

"And I have made you so!"

He uttered the words chokingly, for this was even a worse reception of his honest avowal than he had, in the moments of greatest timidity, anticipated. It was a bitter lesson to read, that the woman he loved was distressed by the mere mention of his attachment.

"No, no, Mr. Lyon; it is not you who have made me so. Ah! do not misunderstand me—you who have been so good and true a friend to me—you who have obtained from me the confidence and affection of a sister; it is not you who have brought this sorrow to me!"

"Sorrow to you! what sorrow?"

"I cannot explain it now; I cannot tell you any more than that its cause has made me fear to-day that it may tear from me your esteem and respect."

"In Heaven's name, what can you mean? You are trembling; you are pale as death. I beseech you, set my mind at rest, and tell me what afflicts you!"

A shudder seemed to pass over her frame.

"I dare not yet, for another's sake."

He echoed the words mentally, never dreaming what a terrible import they were to assume, and regarded her with astonishment the while. At length—

"I will not press you on this subject, since it distresses you; but, at least, you will satisfy me in regard to another matter. Your father approves of my offer; may I speak to him again?"

"It is useless," she faltered, turning away her head.

"You mean at present," he added eagerly; "but at some future time—"

"No," she interrupted sadly; "what you desire can never be. All the respect, all the love a sister could give, I have already given to you, Mr. Lyon. I can never give you any more."

"Never!" he repeated wistfully.

"You will understand me better when I tell you frankly that I have intrusted my future already to another's care."

The answer pierced his heart keenly, and he could only mutter the word "another."

"Yes, one to whom I am bound by bonds that can never be broken."

"You mean—"

"Alick Tavendale."

"Him! your cousin? Surely not. Your father will never approve of such a choice."

"He cannot hinder me; or, if he will, then I can never be the wife of any other. I have been frank with you, and surely that will prove how much I esteem you. I only wish that I had been able to show you this sooner, that I might have spared you what I know you must be suffering now on my account."

He had lost the little color his face usually possessed; his lips trembled, and his eyes were fixed straight before him, as if he were trying to see something at a distance. Her head was still bowed, and though she had removed the traces of her tears she still wore an expression of deep grief, almost as if she would have answered him differently had she not been restrained by some influence that was stronger than her own wishes.

By and by he started from his painful reverie, and, bending towards her, laid his hand gently on hers.

"I thank you, Katie, for many happy hours, many bright dreams, which have made my life happier," he said gently; "I have wakened at length to the knowledge that it was a dream. No matter, I am content, and the memory of that dream will always be dear to me, although I will not disturb you again by referring to it."

"You know what it is to love, Mr. Lyon?" she said simply.

"I do indeed; and, believing that you too know the trust, the depth, and constancy of love, I feel my own is hopeless. Henceforth I am your friend—your brother—in every act and word; no more, whatever I may be at heart."

"You will forget, I hope," she said, falteringly.

"Forget! impossible. You are a thousand times dearer to me even now, when I am hopeless, than you can ever be to—"

He stopped; for he was unable to pronounce the name of Taven-dale. He added huskily:

"And you will always be dear to me. I will say nothing of what has passed between us to Mr. Cargill."

"Thanks, thanks!"

"I will come here as rarely as possible without giving cause for gossiping tongues to hint that there has been a rupture. And whatever happens, Katie, trust me, you will find in me one who will gladly give his life to serve you. For the rest, I have courage, Katie, and I can endure."

She pressed his hand gratefully as he withdrew it.

"Your friendship may have a severer test than you can anticipate. But, for the present, try to forgive me what harm I may have done you without intention."

"I do sincerely. I will not go farther with you now; if you will pardon me, I will turn down the avenue and make for the town. I

feel that I need to be alone for a little while, and I can only find solitude and solace in my study. Good-bye; when we meet again I will be calmer. Good-bye."

They had entered the avenue as he spoke, and he now turned his horse's head in the direction of the lodge; while Katie continued her way to the house.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CRIMINAL DENOUNCED.

MR. LYON had ridden half-way down the avenue at a smart trot, when he passed a gentleman who bowed to him, and whose salute he returned in a somewhat distant manner.

The gentleman was on foot, and was walking towards the house. His pace was leisurely, and his whole bearing suggested a careless, half-lazy, half-indifferent disposition. He was about twenty-eight or thirty years, with dark-brown curly hair, tawny complexion, handsome features, and well-knit figure. His eyes were dark hazel. His attire was elegant, although not foppish, and he was smoking a cigar with an amber mouthpiece. His visage and general bearing would have impressed one at first sight with the idea that his was one of those cool, philosophic temperaments which nothing can disturb; but a second glance revealed that there was sterner stuff beneath this placid exterior.

He smiled good-humoredly as Mr. Lyon rode by; the latter bit his lips and frowned as soon as he had passed.

"I do not like Alick Tavendale," he muttered, quickening his horse's pace; "and yet I know nothing evil of him. Heaven forgive me, but I feel as if I hated him, because I know she loves him."

He set his teeth almost fiercely, and as soon as he had passed the lodge-gates he started at a quick gallop along the road for the city, as if he were trying to run away from the unhappy thoughts and feelings which were tormenting him.

"I was a fool," he reflected as he rode, "to think that she could ever have thought of me as a husband—I, who am about fifteen years older than herself; but then I am only about four years older than Tavendale. Ay, but there is the difference; he can play the gallant, and gratify the thousand petty little whims and fancies of a woman, while I, in my abstraction and blindness to the trivial accomplishments of life, seem cold, dull, and callous. But which of us would sacrifice most for her real happiness? Which of us would be steadiest in the devotion which makes daily intercourse a delight? Not he—not he."

With these bitter thoughts he had galloped nearly four miles, when he suddenly checked his horse, and, with knitted brows, repeated the words of Katie: "One to whom I am bound by bonds that can never be broken."

"Yes, she loves him deeply, and I do not believe he is worthy of her love. Do I say that because he is poor? No; but I feel that because he is not earnest. His life has no purpose, no aim; and he is content to dawdle away his time in the counting-house of Mr. Cargill, not because he knows himself useful there, but because he obtains his salary without the necessity of doing much work for it. Bah! it is contemptible, and he is unworthy of her."

Another half-mile nearer to Woodland Road, and again he muttered to himself—this time with a grave, anxious curiosity:

"What can her secret sorrow be that weighs so heavily upon her? Is it her fear that her father may discover her love and remove Tavendale? It must be that, for there is nothing else that could agitate her so deeply. She has trusted me; I will be faithful to her trust, and that, at least, will soothe the pain of her rejection."

When he reached his house he was informed that a gentleman had been waiting for him for the past hour. On entering the library he found John Hadden.

"You are earlier than I expected, Mr. Hadden," he said, after having greeted the detective. "Have you made any fresh discovery?"

"I think I have made the discovery which brings me within arm's length of the criminal."

"Already? Impossible!"

Hadden rubbed his hands together with an air of the greatest satisfaction at the sight of the magistrate's astonishment.

"Everything is possible, Mr. Lyon; and I beg to repeat that I am within arm's length of the assassin."

"Then I shall proclaim you the sharpest detective that ever has been or will be in the force," said Mr. Lyon, smiling at the satisfaction of the good man.

"That's not it—my sharpness has nothing to do with it," said Hadden, quickly. "Providence has done everything."

"You are modest, Mr. Hadden; but I am anxious to learn what you have discovered, and how you have succeeded so soon. Be seated."

John Hadden drew a chair close to the table, pulled out his big pocket-book, and produced various memoranda.

"If you will excuse me, Mr. Lyon, I would like to obtain your opinion before I mention any names; so that, at first, I will tell you simply the circumstances which have satisfied me as to the motive of the crime and the perpetrator of it."

"Proceed in your own way."

Then the detective, referring only occasionally to his notes, with a marvellous precision and lucidity narrated all that he had learned from Sarah Burnett. He repeated the contents of some of the letters from memory, word for word with the original.

"On these letters," he added, "rests the first part of my proof, for it is in the exchange of the children that we find the germ of the murder. One crime has begot the other."

"It is a strange story," said Mr. Lyon, thoughtfully, "and I believe you are right. If these letters are genuine our course is clear."

"I've got one of them here, in order to prove the writing, in the first place."

"You have not done so yet?"

"No, but you can help me to do that."

"Most willingly. But now, whose hand do you think struck the blow? Surely not the young lady who finds herself about to be dragged from her high position?"

"Oh dear, no! The blow was not struck by her, nor by her father either, though one of them has been instrumental to the deed."

"But who was the actual perpetrator?"

"I told you at the first the murderer was a young man, elegant and cool. I said just now that I was within arm's reach of him. You shall know why."

"I attend."

"I slept little last night—indeed, I walked about till after two o'clock, and then went to bed. I was up again at five, and commenced my search. By half-past ten o'clock I had completed my inquiries, and this was the result:

"The gentleman I have referred to as the millionaire has a nephew, who is the son of the sister of the millionaire. The sister made what one may call a bad match, and was estranged from her family in consequence. Her husband died, leaving her in poor circumstances, with her son to support as best she could.

"For the sake of her son she appealed to the millionaire, her brother; and he, either softened by time or his sister's prayer, educated the boy, and when he had grown up placed him in his counting-house. Meanwhile the sister died, and the young man was left without any relation in the world, save his master and benefactor, and his master's daughter.

"The young man, however, is disposed to be indolent; takes every advantage of his position in the counting-house as the nephew of the proprietor, and does as little work as possible. He amuses himself by lounging about on every occasion when he can escape from the office, and he is very partial to Havana cigars, which he smokes with an amber mouthpiece.

"The impression among his comrades is that he believes that his

uncle will provide for him in his will; and in the meanwhile, to make sure of that, he has been secretly making love to his cousin. The lady happens to have a maid—a discreet woman who knows the value of a sovereign, and from whom I obtained the main part of my information. Well, this maid, who of course is intimately acquainted with the affairs of her mistress—who, to some extent, makes her a confidante—this maid informs me that the young gentleman has prospered in his suit, and has obtained his cousin's promise to marry him, if the consent of her father can be had.

“He has not yet sought that consent, and the maid believes that he wants her mistress to marry him in secret, and ask her father's consent afterwards. She won't agree to that, and meanwhile they meet frequently in the gardens or the park.

“Now comes my argument. The lady, having been made acquainted with her real position, is in distress. Her father being absent, she does not see which way to turn for support and counsel. What more natural than that she should confide the whole story to her lover, having implicit trust in him? She tells him, at any rate, and he sees the position of the lady cannot be affected without injuring him. But he sees at the same time that if the proofs possessed by Jean Gorbai could be destroyed, the rest might be explained or defied.

“Better than all that, he sees that if he could be the means of removing Jean Gorbai's proofs, he would at once change positions with his uncle, and he would have the power to demand what at present he dare not ask. Jean Gorbai removed by him, he would become the husband of a beautiful wife and the heir to a million.

“It took him five days to make up his mind to this course, and on the sixth day—that was the 15th of the month—he acted. He murdered Jean Gorbai and burned the papers she had carefully kept, as the ashes I found in the grate proved.” Hadden's visage glowed with triumph as he finished, and he fixed his eyes on the magistrate to read the effect of his singularly conclusive argument.

“The evidence you have collected points to the nephew as the probable assassin. But you have nothing yet sufficiently positive to implicate him in the crime—nothing to prove that he was in Port-Dundas on the 15th—nothing, in short, directly to connect him with the deed.”

“That we shall find.”

“How?”

“Issue a warrant to search his lodgings and to arrest him, if necessary. In the lodgings you will find, perhaps, the weapon with which the blow was struck; and, at any rate, the fiscal can compel him to show where he was on the evening of the 15th from six or seven o'clock till midnight.”

"We will get that done, certainly. And now you can tell me the names of the parties."

"Surely. The first, the lady who has unknowingly been the chief instrument in the unravelment of this dark business, is at present known as Miss Sarah Burnett, daughter of Mrs. Burnett, Hill Street. The name of the young lady who at present usurps her place is Miss Katherine Cargill."

"Good Heaven! It is impossible!" cried the magistrate, bounding to his feet.

"How? Why impossible? Are not the proofs under our hands? But I knew you would be amazed. I grant it is an almost incredible affair. But the proofs—the proofs, Mr. Lyon, cannot be denied. The name of the father of the young lady is Mr. Robert Cargill, of Mavisbank House; and the name of the assassin is Alick Tavendale, the dependent nephew of the millionaire."

Mr. Lyon stood stupefied with amaze and horror, his eyes wide, and fixed on the detective, while his lips mechanically formed the names—

"Katie Cargill! Alick Tavendale!"

"Precisely. They are the persons that must supply the final explanation, and—but are you ill, Mr. Lyon?"

"No, no," he answered, scarcely knowing what he was saying. "I am well enough, but the surprise, the shock—"

"I understand, sir; I know that you are acquainted with Miss Cargill and her father, and that was one of my reasons for desiring to conceal their names until you had had an opportunity of forming an opinion on the facts I have produced."

"Will you excuse me for a few minutes, Mr. Hadden? I will return to you immediately."

"I will wait, sir."

Mr. Lyon went out to the garden, and choosing a pathway which was screened on either side by carefully cut walls of evergreens, he walked up and down, with hands clinched behind him, thinking over the terrible position in which he found himself. He was bathed in a cold perspiration, although his brain burned at fever-heat, and his pulse throbbed violently.

Here was the woman he loved with the devotion of his whole nature denounced as the accomplice of a murderer; here was the man he had only a little while ago said to himself he hated, delivered into his hands as an assassin; and here was he himself, a magistrate, bound by conscience and his office to punish crime without regard to persons, called upon now to vindicate his honor and worthiness of his office, by handing over the being he would have died to serve to the jailer, and to give her lover to the hangman.

He would have been more than human had he not felt the thought,

the desire, flash through him to save her, and to let Tavendale perish as he deserved.

"Impossible!" he mentally exclaimed, flushing at the dishonorable thought; "even if I could save her from shame by sacrificing my own life and honor, would I not be guilty of a double crime in robbing Sarah Burnett of her rights? No. Heaven help me! I dare not do that, and I have not courage to proceed."

He understood the cause of Katie's illness; he knew now her secret, and he understood the meaning of her answer, when he had asked her to trust him: "*I dare not yet, for another's sake.*"

And again:

"I am bound to him by bonds that can never be broken."

"I see it all now, I see it all," he groaned; "but oh, merciful powers! it is impossible that she can be an accomplice in this deed. It cannot be. I will not believe it till she tells me with her own lips that she is guilty. How answer the proofs then? He must have told her after the deed was done, and so implicated her. But why did she not denounce him? Not because she feared to lose her position—no—no—no—but because she loves him, unworthy as he is. Ah! what will a true woman not do for the man she loves!"

For half an hour he continued his troubled promenade up and down the screened path. He had not even then arrived at any satisfactory conclusion; but he had brought his emotion under control, and he was outwardly calm.

He returned to the library, where John Hadden was waiting patiently, busy in the examination of a large tome of legal reports.

"I have decided, Mr. Hadden," said the sheriff, in a steady voice; "we will take no decisive step until to-morrow at noon. Meanwhile you can get one of the men to keep Tavendale in view—let him not lose sight of him. For the lady I will be responsible."

"You, Mr. Lyon!" ejaculated Hadden, evidently not quite pleased by the delay.

"Yes; my reasons for what may seem to you dallying with the case are good ones. First, I wish to receive a report from Captain Mactier, which I am certain to have by to-morrow; and, next, I desire you to obtain some proof that will associate Tavendale more distinctly with the murder than any you have got at present, before we make him aware of the charge against him, by issuing a search-warrant. Lastly, I wish to compare Mr. Cargill's writing with that of the letter you have got. Remember, he occupies an important position, and we must approach him with due caution, and some respect—for even the most circumstantial and convincing proofs will sometimes err."

"I bow to your decision, Mr. Lyon. No doubt you are right. Here is the letter you require."

"I will return it to you to-morrow."

"Thank you, sir. To-morrow, at noon, I will be here, and I will bring with me the proof we need. The measure of his foot will suffice for that."

"Before you go, Mr. Hadden, permit me to congratulate you sincerely on the result of your exertions. I am convinced—although I should gladly feel otherwise—that you are right when you say you are within arm's reach of the criminal."

"I have no doubt, myself; but at the same time, Mr. Lyon, you understand that the discovery has been made by Jock Sly—not Hadden."

"I will remember."

"Thank you, sir," said Hadden, and respectfully took leave.

Mr. Lyon sat down, leaning his elbows on the table, and buried his face in his hands. The work before him was repulsive and horrible to every sentiment of his nature, but there was no hope of evading it; and, however much he might suffer in doing it, he was not a man to fail in his duty.

CHAPTER VIII.

L. HEWITT, WRITER, GEORGE STREET.

THE clocks were striking two, afternoon, when Sarah Burnett, as she must continue to be called for the present, to avoid confusion, turned out of Buchanan Street into George Street. She entered the passage of a grave, dingy-looking building, which was occupied from top to bottom as offices. She ascended one flight of stairs, and halted at a door upon which was a brass plate, with the intimation, "L. Hewitt, Writer."

She opened the door and entered.

An exceedingly sharp boy, with short legs, seated on a stool with long legs, turned his head to see what was wanted, and, in doing so, revealed the fact that his neck was encircled by a broad, white, and painfully stiff collar. Observing his visitor, the sharp lad, without waiting to inquire name or business, jumped from his perch, rushed to the door of Mr. Hewitt's private room, threw it open and announced,

"Miss Burnett."

She was dressed in a long black cloak, and a modest bonnet of dark color; and as she glided noiselessly through the outer office she had the appearance of a demure Quakeress, only the light in the eye was a little too keen for a young lady of the Society of Friends, and the mould of the features a little too hard.

The boy closed the door when she had entered the room, nodded, grinned, and winked to himself, as if he understood all about it; then wheeled round and remounted the stool with a spring, as if he had been going to play leap-frog over it and had stopped half-way.

Mr. Hewitt rose to salute his visitor with the calmness of one who had been expecting the visit.

He was a gentleman over thirty years of age, tall, slim, and of easy bearing. His features, although prominent, did not seem strikingly so, in consequence of his fair complexion. His hair was of a sandy hue, with a red tinge, curly, and cut short; his eyes were of a faint gray color; and his eyelashes were scarcely perceptible. He invariably bore a suave, pleading smile, and displayed two rows of very fine white teeth. It was a face which one would have had a difficulty in deciding whether to like or dislike at first.

His general bearing and appearance gave one the same impression; he had all the air of one moving in the best society, and he was dressed with the utmost precision and in the most fashionable style. Yet it was impossible for an ordinarily experienced person to meet the man without entertaining a suspicion that his outside was not a true representation of his real character.

A third or fourth meeting with him, however, generally removed this impression, and among the many who knew him he was regarded as a trustworthy gentleman, most earnest and industrious in the pursuit of his profession.

He had entered the office of one of the old legal firms of the city as a message-boy, and by hard, persevering exertion he had raised himself to his present position. He was therefore a man to be respected and admired.

"At last you have come," he said, in a low voice that would have puzzled one to say whether the tone were that of anger or delight. He took her hands, while he stooped and touched her brow with his lips.

There was no enthusiasm, not the faintest ray of passion on either side, and they were the coolest brace of lovers propriety could wish to see.

He placed a chair for her by the window, which was the part of the room farthest from the door. She seated herself, but he remained standing, and alternately observed the evolutions of a quill, which he was twirling between his fingers, and the dark face of Sarah.

"Were you anxious for me to come sooner?" she asked, as she seated herself; but it was the tone of one who desires to learn the nature of some possible event, rather than that of a lady gratified to find that her lover has eagerly awaited her coming.

"Well, I have been wishing to see you, of course, Sarah; for, knowing the state of trouble you are in, I cannot help feeling anxious about you."

They were sympathetic words, but there was not a note of sympathy in the man's hard voice.

"Then you have discovered nothing since I saw you? Have you tried?"

"Can *you* doubt that? I watch every movement as the cat watches a mouse, ready to spring at the first signal of an attempt to elude me. I have learned nothing, however, save that Mr. Cargill arrives by the afternoon train from Liverpool."

"I thought he had been in London."

"So he has; but he arrived in Liverpool yesterday, and remained there till to-day on some business connected with his American steamers."

"What time does he arrive?"

"At three-thirty."

"We will go up to the station. I have a fancy that I should like to see him once again, before he knows how affairs stand."

"As you please, Sarah. Have you got the money?"

"Yes, I have got fifty pounds. Will that do?"

She handed him a roll of notes to the amount stated. She had just obtained them from the bank as payment of John Hadden's check.

Hewitt counted them slowly, speaking the while:

"I find that the process will be somewhat expensive, unless a happy accident of some sort occurs to help us; and I have already explained to you that I have not got a farthing. There are fifty here."

Sarah looked thoughtfully at the floor, and her eyes rested vacantly on the shining patent-leather boots which encased the neat, small feet of her lover.

"When that is exhausted," she said, slowly, "I do not know where to get more. We must borrow it somewhere; but we will think of that when the time comes."

"In the meanwhile, have you thought over what I said?" he queried, while he placed the notes in his purse. "Do you not see that, as your husband, I shall be able to act with more boldness and decision in forcing your claims to a legitimate issue?"

"Yes, but you would act under the suspicion of an interested party; and so your labor would lose half its effect. No, Laurence, no; we will wait till I have obtained my proper place as heiress of Mavisbank, and then—I am yours."

Still not the slightest warmth in her tone; and he bowed his head gravely, as if the decision had been one of the most ordinary character in his practice.

"I have thought of that; and as you have delayed so long, perhaps it will be better as you have decided. I will act for you in all respects as earnestly as if you were already my wife. For my reward I will wait."

"You can trust me?"

A brief pause; then slowly, and with a peculiar expression in his faint gray eyes—an expression of power and of will to use it—he answered deliberately:

"Yes; I can trust you, Sarah."

"I will be faithful. We play for a high stake, Laurence. Let no doubt or misunderstanding between us mar the fortune that is before us. Will you come now?"

"In a moment; there is plenty of time, and I wish to finish this letter before going out."

He seated himself at the writing-table, and rapidly completed the epistle which had been interrupted by the entrance of Sarah; he sealed the letter, took his hat and umbrella, and told the boy that if anybody called he would be in again at four o'clock.

Then he accompanied Sarah to the Queen Street station, and on the way he posted the letter.

The train was not due when they arrived at the station, so they promenaded slowly up and down in front, conversing low and earnestly. They came to an abrupt standstill, when, a couple of minutes before the train arrived, a carriage drove up to the station.

"It is my sister Kate," said Sarah, bitterly, directing her companion's attention to the pale, fair young face within the carriage.

At that moment the shrieking whistle and the loud-panting engine were heard. Then there was a rush of passengers and porters, cabs and wheelbarrows; and through the midst of the bustle, noise, and confusion a tall, dignified-looking old gentleman advanced to the carriage, and was eagerly greeted by its occupant.

"That is Mr. Cargill," said Hewitt, with a faint, peculiar smile, as the old gentleman stepped into the carriage. "He looks pretty well for his age."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MILLIONAIRE AT HOME.

WITH the calmness of a man conscious of his own greatness, Mr. Cargill accepted the obsequious attentions of the railway officials and his own attendants. With a cold, stately inclination of the head he acknowledged the warm salutation of his daughter, as, with an air of dignified abstraction, he took his seat by her side. He could not kiss her—he could not even smile to her in such a public

place; for it seemed as if he thought the character of a millionaire would suffer irreparable damage if it revealed anything human to the vulgar gaze. It was a rule of his that respect could only be obtained by keeping everybody at a respectful distance, and his bearing effectually carried out his theory.

He was a tall gentleman, and, although verging on sixty years, he was erect as a young officer of the Guards; only his head was usually bent slightly forwards, as if the weight of thought were too heavy for the brow. His hair was thin and iron-gray; his features long and sharp; his eyes somewhat of a pale reddish hue, and glistened like a cat's. Briefly, in appearance and manner he possessed a certain reserved dignity, which perpetually reminded every one with whom he came in contact that this was the millionaire.

As soon as he had seated himself the carriage drove away; and as it passed the place where Sarah and Mr. Hewitt were standing, the former shielded herself from observation by placing her companion between her and the vehicle.

"Come," she said, sharply, when the carriage had disappeared, and clutched Mr. Hewitt's arm tightly; "I must go back to Hill Street; to-morrow we will learn something definite."

"Yes, to-morrow," responded Mr. Hewitt, in his dry, decisive way.

They leisurely retraced their steps; she leaning on his arm, with her head bowed in thought; he, with head erect, and eyes keenly observant of every passer-by, as if challenging the world to question the propriety of his conduct.

The carriage had nearly performed half its journey to Mavisbank before Mr. Cargill even regarded his daughter with more than the most casual observation. When, however, at length he did so, he was struck by the exceeding pallor of Katie's visage, and the deep sorrow which was so plainly revealed there.

"You are looking ill, my child," he said, in a cold, sharp voice, but with a movement of his heavy white eyebrows which intimated the alarm his tone failed to indicate. "What is the matter?"

She was startled, apparently by the abruptness of the question, and rejoined confusedly:

"Nothing, papa—that is—I will explain by and by. Leave me a little while to enjoy the sense of your presence, and—and to prepare for what I have to tell you."

Another movement of his eyebrows, but not another word until they reached Mavisbank. At the entrance he asked her to alight, and, with the politeness of an old gallant, gave her his arm to conduct her into the house.

The domestics, in their glittering livery, were ranged in two lines in the hall to receive their master. The latter glanced at them as he

passed along, as if to make sure that they were all in becoming state for the reception of so great a personage; and, satisfied on that head, paid no further heed to any of them. There was no word on his lips, no smile on his visage, to betoken that he regarded them as fellow-creatures, capable of feeling love or hate. They were paid to serve, and when they had served there was nothing more between them and their master.

The great man was punctilious in the observance of all the details of social courtesies, and dined in as much state when only his daughter was at table with him as on any of the rare occasions when his grace the Duke of Lomond accepted his hospitality.

Consequently, an hour was occupied in dressing for dinner; and when he descended from his private apartment he met Katie on the threshold of the dining-room. They entered together. Two silent and powdered domestics placed the chairs for them; the butler was at his post, and another hour was occupied in the ceremonious despatch of the repast.

The chamber was vast, with high, painted ceiling. The furniture was of the richest and most luxurious kind money could obtain; and, altogether, the place and its surroundings would have destroyed the appetite of anybody unaccustomed to them.

At length dessert was served, in a style becoming the other arrangements, the domestics retired, and Mr. Cargill, sitting in dignified ease on his chair, sipping his wine, was left alone with his daughter.

He made several attempts to interest her by describing the numerous presents he had purchased for her in London, and which would arrive at the house that evening; but although she forced herself to smile, it was a sad smile; and although she thanked him for his indulgence, it was in such a low, weary tone that he became somewhat irritated, and apparently uneasy.

"What has happened to you, Katie? You answer me as if you were sorry rather than pleased to know how I have been thinking of you during my absence. Speak, child, what is it?"

She was startled, hesitated, and then stepped quickly over to him, and, placing her arms round his neck, rested her head on his shoulder, sobbing. Mr. Cargill's sharp features underwent a spasmodic twinge, as if the most sensitive part of his body had been hurt. He smoothed the fair silken hair of the girl with his hand, while his brow darkened in alarm at what might be to follow.

"This is very odd, Katie," he muttered presently, trying to assume a tone of simple remonstrance; "very odd. You say you are not ill, and yet, instead of being, as formerly, merry and happy at my return, you are sad, as if I brought misfortune with me—ah! I remember, you have something to explain to me. What is it?"

She tightened her arms around his neck, and seemed to be striving hard to subdue her sobs.

"Whatever happens, dear, dear papa," she responded brokenly, "I will always love you, always treasure the memory of your goodness to me, and never blame you."

He was silent; his visage had gradually become of an ashen hue, and his thin lips quivered, while his eyes glistened more redly than usual. Abruptly, even harshly:

"Speak, Katie, let me know your trouble."

Tremblingly came the answer:

"I have read the letters you wrote years ago to Mrs. Burnett, and I know all the sad story connected with them."

His form shook as with a violent galvanic shock; he stared straight before him, and there was a long pause—a stillness in the room, disturbed only by the sobs of the girl.

The secret which had been so faithfully kept on all sides for twenty-one years had crept to the light at last, and the millionaire's sin had found him out. Useless now to regret and curse the stupidity which had permitted him to leave the fatal letters in the hands of his accomplice. Useless now to repent the indiscretion which had permitted these documents to exist a moment after they had served the purpose for which they were written. Useless all; the crime and its Nemesis had arisen against him after many years, and in the midst of his wealth and dignities he must be pointed at as a man to be avoided and contemned, although he was a millionaire.

For the moment he felt as if he would readily have changed positions with his own butler.

Pride, and his faith in the potency of his gold, came to the rescue. He defied the world and its scorn as boldly as he had, years ago, braved it. But even in that spirit of defiance there was a serpent's tooth; for when he would have raised himself in cold dignity, and said, "Not a word more of this," his tongue refused to move, and his heart ached in dread of the contempt of the daughter he loved dearly, and for whose sake he had risked all. Her scorn he could not bear.

She had not raised her face from his shoulder, and he spoke without shifting his position, for he dared not look at her.

"When did you see these letters, and where?" he said huskily, but calmly.

"I saw them here. They have been discovered by Sarah Burnett—that is, Sarah Cargill—and she came to see you. Not finding you, she gave them to me."

"And you burned them?" he cried, with sudden excitement.

"Burned them? No!"

She raised herself as she made the response.

"What! you held these letters in your hands, and you did not destroy them? Oh, fool! fool! I should not have left that for you to do."

Kate was surprised by the bitterness and passion of his manner, but more by the suggestion of the dishonorable act which apparently would have pleased him. Her face became flushed with shame, and she drew back a pace from him.

He seemed to divine her thought and to shrink under her gaze, although he still avoided meeting it, for he attempted to defend himself against the indignation he feared she felt, and was about to express.

"Don't speak—don't speak, Katie. Ah, my child, it is a heavy punishment to bear when the parent stands before his child, his head bowed with shame. You blame me, I know; and you will hate me—"

"Father, father, hush!" she cried, laying her hand on his mouth. He went on excitedly:

"But you cannot know what I have suffered during these long years in which the secret has been hidden. Do you think I have not ached in heart and brain for the wrong I have done my wife? Do you think I have not been tortured by thoughts of the child whose position and name I had stolen for you? I have—bitterly."

"It is not too late to atone," whispered Kate.

"I have prospered in my dealings," he went on, not hearing her. "Wealth and honors have poured in upon me. Gold, gold, gold, has come in streams to me, but it has brought me no pleasure. I have built churches, I have thrown thousands to the charities of the world, and men have pointed to me as the benefactor of my race. But it has brought me no peace of mind. I have been shuddering day and night under the burden of my sin, and your smiles and your love, my child, have been the only gleams of comfort my heart has known."

"They are always yours, dear father, happen what may."

"They are—they shall be!" he cried fiercely. "Since I have endured so long, I will endure to the end. They shall not take you from me. This thing they talk about is false; the letters they have shown you are worthless. They can prove nothing against me, since Largie is dead."

"But Jean Gorbai?"

"Ah!" he started at the name. "She is dead, too."

Katie was staggered by that unexpected announcement, and her exclamation of mingled regret and surprise seemed to restore her father's self-possession, for he filled his glass with wine, drew his chair a little closer to the table, and raised the glass.

"It is as I say—the poor woman is dead," he said, with some-

thing of his ordinary cold firmness; "and Sarah Burnett shall remain Sarah Burnett. Whatever she wants she shall have; but you shall remain my daughter, Katie Cargill."

"No, father, no!" she cried, her eyes brightened and face flushed with the love of truth and devotion: "your wealth, your name, your position, all belong to Sarah by right, not to me, and I renounce them all. Your daughter I shall be always, but Katie Cargill I am no more."

"You are mad!" he cried, starting forward in his chair, one hand clutching the edge of the table desperately, while from the other the wine-glass he had been raising to his lips dropped to the floor and was smashed.

"Not mad, father—not even foolish," she said, strong in her resolve to do right. "I am only trying to be just to that good lady who loved me and cared for me as her daughter, and whose memory I cherish as that of a dear mother. I cannot and will not stand in the place of her child; and so far as I may I will make atonement for the crime to which I have innocently been made a party. Do you care for my love? Then you will not attempt to hinder me in this."

"Kate, my child, if you are not mad yourself you will make me so. Think of the shame, the disgrace, you will heap upon me; think how you will bend my head before the world, and make me a finger-mark for the scorn and contempt of all whose esteem I value most."

"That you must endure, dear father, as I must endure the pang of changing places with my sister."

"You shall not do it, I say—by Heaven you shall not!"

"I know that what I am about to do should be done," she said, covering her eyes with her delicate hand, as if to shut out the spectacle of his rage and pain; "and not even my regard for you will hinder me."

"You have been deceived, I tell you; this story is all a fabrication, and I will crush its promulgators as I do the fragments of that glass under my heel."

He ground the broken glass furiously as he spoke. He was unaccustomed to opposition of any sort, and the persistence of Katie in her resolution roused him beyond measure. But even at the height of his fury he was subdued and abashed by the sad, sweet face and the reproachful eyes.

"You are not speaking truly, father; and—ah, no! I will not believe that you could hide your sin by perjury."

"You have grown bold," he began, angrily, but he broke down; "I am confused, Katie, by all this. Go to your room, my child, for a little while, and let me think over it."

The pitiable tone with which the proud man confessed his weak-

ness touched her more than the loudest protestations could have done. She advanced to him softly, and, laying her hands on his shoulders, kissed him affectionately.

"Dear father, there is only one course for us to pursue, and that is the course to which duty and repentance point. Atonement for the past has been too long delayed; we must make it now."

She moved quietly from the room, leaving him with head bowed, in silence, chagrin, and sorrow.

CHAPTER X.

LINK BY LINK.

EXACTLY at noon on the following day John Hadden presented himself at the door of the sheriff-substitute's house in Woodlands Road. He was immediately ushered into the study, where Mr. Lyon was prepared to receive him.

The detective's face was, as usual, covered with a simple smile of subdued curiosity at everything he saw; only his eyes twinkled with self-satisfaction. But Mr. Lyon was very pale, and looked decidedly ill. It was evident that he had slept little during the previous night, for he seemed fatigued, and his eyes were slightly bloodshot.

"You are punctual, Mr. Hadden," he said, with a faint smile.

"Yes, sir; I have come at the hour appointed to ask for the warrant of arrest."

"Then you have made some further discovery?"

"I have; not much, certainly, but enough, I think, to justify decisive measures."

"Captain Mactier has also made a discovery."

Hadden's eyes twinkled, not with surprise, but mirth, as if he anticipated a joke.

"I would be glad to know, sir, if you will permit me, what the captain has discovered."

"Assuredly. I received his despatch this morning; and I must say that its contents appear to me of more importance than I had anticipated."

"Captain Mactier is a vigilant officer," said Mr. Hadden, humbly.

"He is, indeed, although sometimes deficient in discrimination, and always dogged in his opinion. In the present instance, however, you will find that there is some reason in his argument. At any rate, the result of his exertions will add to our knowledge of Jean Gorbals's private affairs, and thereby draw us the closer to the identity of the perpetrator of the crime."

"Just so, sir."

Mr. Lyon produced a packet of blue foolscap, endorsed on the back with red ink. He unfolded it, and showed the statement, written in a neat round hand, with particular passages underlined in red ink. On the first of these passages Mr. Lyon laid his finger.

“He says here that on arriving at Carron he was for some time baffled by failing to learn what boats had passed through on the night of the murder, as the man who had then been in charge of the locks had been dismissed on the succeeding day for some misdemeanor, and had gone to Liverpool immediately afterward.

“Captain Mactier, after making various inquiries in Carron and Edinburgh, late yesterday evening found him. The man’s name is Bill Johnston, and his information is to this effect: There is a man called Bob Little, who is master of a barge known as the *Elizabeth*. The captain is satisfied that this is the same Bob Little to whom a boy carried a message from a man who wore earrings.”

“Ah—what of him?”

“You will hear. On the morning of the 15th—that was the day of the crime—Little passed through Carron to Glasgow with his scow unloaded. There was a man lying at the stern on a tarpaulin, smoking, and drinking ale from a can. He was not one of Little’s assistants, for he had only two, and they were with him as usual. Besides, he paid some degree of respect to the man on the tarpaulin, and Little appears to be one of those rough fellows who pay respect to nobody, unless they have some immediate gain in view, or are compelled by circumstances to be respectful.

“The former was evidently the reason of Little’s respect, for the stranger treated him with a species of contemptuous familiarity, and caused him to jump ashore to get more liquor and tobacco. Johnston cannot remember how this stranger was dressed; but he did recollect noticing that a handkerchief of blue-and-white check pattern lay beside him, as if he had taken it out for use, and had either forgotten it, or had been too lazy to replace it in his pocket. Late that night—the 15th—Bob Little again passed through Carron with his scow. The strange man was not with him. Johnston had asked what he had done with his queer chum.

“‘Sent him to blazes,’ Little answered, sulkily, and, as Johnston thought, drunkenly.

“The captain was anxious to bring to Johnston’s memory the earrings of the strange man, but failed. Johnston had not observed them, and did not think the man had any, or he would have been sure to have noticed them. The captain thinks it possible that something more may be learned from this witness, and meanwhile he is in pursuit of the *Elizabeth* and Little, whom he expects to lay hands upon before to-morrow.”

Hadden's long fingers played with the thick, gold-mounted head of the staff he carried, and his eyes were fixed on the floor. Presently:

"Something there may be in this, as you say, Mr. Lyon, and it is just possible that, though we blind creatures can't see how, at this minute, Captain Mactier may have taken up the case at another end, and is, maybe, just advancing to meet me half-way and complete the proof."

"Then you think it probable that his pursuit will lead him to the same person you have reached?"

"I do, and this is why: on the 12th—that was three days after Sarah Burnett had been at Mavisbank House, and which was about the time you might allow Miss Cargill to make up her mind to relieve herself somewhat of her trouble by telling her lover all—Mr. Tavendale returned to his lodgings in Sauchiehall Street late at night. His manner was so excited that Mrs. Marshall, his landlady, thought he had been drinking more than usual. He would not take any supper, and went to bed.

"On the morning of the 13th he rose about six o'clock, being two hours before his ordinary time of rising. At half-past six he entered his sitting-room to procure his hat, which he had left there on the previous night. The servant girl, Lizzie Dunn, was cleaning the room, and she thought he looked very ill. She asked him if she should get some breakfast for him, and he answered:

"'No; I don't feel well. I am going for a walk. Perhaps I shall not return till evening.'

"He went out, and did not return till twelve o'clock at night. He was very quiet, and went to bed immediately. On the following morning he again went out between six and seven o'clock, still looking unwell, and scarcely speaking to Mrs. Marshall, who, on this occasion, met him in the lobby. She hoped he was better, and he answered hurriedly:

"'Yes, yes; much better. It's only a little indigestion. I'll be all right again in a day or so.'

"He did not return till ten o'clock that night. Then he took a hearty supper, and drank two large glassfuls of brandy with hot water. When the things had been removed from his table he told the servant not to disturb him again until morning, as he was going to be very busy. He opened his desk, and began to write a letter.

"Mrs. Marshall and her servant went to bed a little after twelve o'clock, and Mr. Tavendale was still in his sitting-room writing. About three o'clock in the morning Mrs. Marshall awakened, and she heard Mr. Tavendale passing to his bedroom.

"He did not get down to breakfast next morning—the 15th, observe, sir—till after nine o'clock. He seemed to be in much better

health than he had been during the two days, and made a jest of his illness to Mrs. Marshall. He asked her to get a man for him to carry a letter to Mavisbank. Her son, a sharp lad, about sixteen years of age, was at home, and she suggested that he should be the messenger. That seemed to please him; and when the lad was brought into the room he gave him a letter addressed to Miss Cargill.

“ ‘Don’t give it to anybody but Miss Cargill herself,’ he said; ‘if she is not at home when you arrive, wait for her, no matter how long, and come back as quick as you can with an answer. Here is money for the ’bus.’ ”

“ ‘The lad went away on his errand. Tavendale then borrowed five pounds from Mrs. Marshall, as he said he was that sum short of an account he wished to pay that forenoon. She had on previous occasions lent him money, which he had repaid, and she at once gave him a five-pound note. He thanked her, and folded it up with a roll of other notes. ”

“ ‘ ‘It’s a heavy account, I see, Mr. Tavendale,’ said Mrs. Marshall. ‘I wish you had been owing it to me.’ ”

“ ‘He gave what his landlady calls a ‘jerky’ and an uncomfortable laugh. ”

“ ‘ ‘Yes, it’s heavy,’ he replied; ‘but it’s just as well you’re not the creditor.’ ”

“ ‘She laughed, and he at the same moment placed the notes in an envelope without address, and sealed it up. She observed it particularly, because she thought it strange that he should put the money in an envelope if he were going to pay it away immediately. He put the envelope containing the notes in his pocket, with two letters which were stamped and directed for the post. He went out, saying he would return before young Marshall could be back from Mavisbank. ”

“ ‘Between two and three o’clock he returned, but the lad had not arrived yet. Dinner was served, and Tavendale dined, apparently with a good appetite. Again he took a couple of glassfuls of brandy and hot water, and lit a cigar. Young Marshall arrived at last. He had seen the lady, and she had told him to say ‘there was no answer.’ ”

“ ‘Tavendale was apparently deeply chagrined and disappointed. He mixed more brandy and water, and remained for an hour smoking and drinking alone. ”

“ ‘At the end of that time a man, who had the appearance of a servant or a waiter, arrived with a note. Tavendale tore it open hurriedly, and both Mrs. Marshall and the girl Lizzie Dunn heard him say: ”

“ ‘ ‘She can’t—she can’t resist.’ ”

"He read the letter several times, and then he burned it."

Hadden was interrupted here by the entrance of a domestic to announce the arrival of Inspector Speirs.

"Show him in," said Mr. Lyon.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WARRANT.

THE inspector presented himself, bowing respectfully to the magistrate and familiarly to Hadden, addressing the latter:

"Our man has gone out to Mavisbank."

"You have him attended, of course?"

The inspector nodded.

"All right;" and Hadden turned to the magistrate to explain:

"I told the inspector to come to me here, if our man moved from the office of Cargill & Company before I returned. Now I will finish my statement. I left off where he had just burned the letter."

He referred to the note-book he had on the table before him, and resumed:

"That was about five o'clock. His spirits seemed to have revived amazingly under the influence of the letter, and he busied himself preparing to go out. At half-past five two friends of his, named Frank Mackie and Duncan Milne, arrived, and he did not seem pleased by their visit. They were going to the theatre to see Powrie in 'Rob Roy,' and they pressed him to accompany them. He excused himself, on the ground that he was obliged that evening to keep an important engagement he had previously made.

"His friends went away, and in about a quarter of an hour afterwards he went out, smoking a cigar and carrying a silk umbrella.

"He did not return till nearly three o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Marshall had waited up for him, as he had forgotten his latch-key. She was struck by the paleness of his face and its queer expression. He seemed to be shivering with cold, and she observed that his clothes were wet, as if he had been out in the rain which had fallen during the evening.

"She asked him if there was anything he would like to take. He said, 'No, nothing,' and he spoke so hoarsely that she thought he had caught cold. While she was giving him a candle, the policeman, making a round of his beat, passed the door, and at the sound Mrs. Marshall thought he started, and shivered more than before. She is positive that he turned his head quickly, and asked if she had fastened the door. Then he went up to his bedroom, and in walking

she observed that he staggered once or twice, so that she concluded he had been drinking again.

“It was after ten o'clock before he got up next morning. He complained of a violent headache, and looked very ill. He took nothing at breakfast save a cup of tea. He remained at home all day—this was Tuesday, you understand.

“Lizzie Dunn, in cleaning out his bedroom, found the clothes he had worn the previous evening lying in a heap in a corner. They were damp, and soiled with mud.

“Tavendale entered the room as she picked them up, and seeing her with them, he appeared to be inexplicably annoyed.

“‘Would you like these dried and brushed, sir?’ the girl asked.

“‘No,’ he said—angrily, the girl fancied; ‘pitch them into a corner, and leave them alone.’

“He took something out of one of his boxes, and went back to his parlor. There he occupied himself in writing letters all day. He also burned a quantity of paper, for the ashes were found lying all over the fender and grate.

“In the evening, after dark, he went out. Mrs. Marshall entered his sitting-room, to arrange it before he returned, and discovered the ashes as I have described. She also found the morning's newspaper lying unopened, just as she had left it on the side-table. This was an unusual occurrence, as Tavendale, well or ill, had hitherto been most particular about the delivery of the paper in the morning, and read it regularly.

“He re-entered his lodgings that evening about half-past nine. He was quiet and silent. Ordinarily he was gay and jocular. He took a little gruel for supper, and was in bed by eleven o'clock.

“Next morning—that was yesterday—he got up about his usual time, and professed himself all right again, and Mrs. Marshall saw that he looked much better; for although he was still pale, and his eyes restless, as if he were nervous about something, his manner had resumed its ordinary gayety and self-possession.”

Hadden stopped, and looked at a few lines which were written at the foot of the page of his note-book, but, as if suddenly determining not to refer to these at present, he closed the book, and replaced it in his pocket.

“That's all, sir.”

The magistrate remained for several minutes in earnest reflection.

“In what way do you associate this with the information we have received from Captain Mactier?” he asked presently.

“By the notes which were enclosed in the envelope without address.”

“The connection is not very clear.”

“No; I grant that, sir, and it can't be until we have discovered

some of the notes. But, you see, on the forenoon of the 15th, Bob Little and his scow passed Carron for Glasgow. The stranger who was lying on the tarpaulin, and who, it is just possible, may be the man with the earrings Mactier is so dogged about, may have had something to do with the account Tavendale had to pay. That, however, is the merest surmise. I have no intention of working on the captain's tack, but the absence of Tavendale from his lodging and his uncle's office on two occasions, from early morning till late at night, suggests that he may have had dealings with some of these men. How far that may be correct we will learn after we have arrested our man. You or the fiscal will grant the warrant, sir, I hope?"

"I can no longer refuse; the evidence more than justifies Mr. Tavendale's arrest; but I hope you will accomplish it as quietly as such a thing can be done, for, remember, the reputation, the happiness, of a lady is deeply concerned in this miserable affair."

"We will show every respect, sir, and, if possible, we will delay the arrest till night, when we can take him quietly from his lodging."

The sheriff signed the warrant of arrest, and handed it to Inspector Speirs.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARREST.

ONE hour after dark a cab drove up Sauchiehall Street from the direction of the city, and stopped at the corner of Cambridge Street.

There were three men inside, and two of them jumped out. The first was John Hadden, the second Inspector Speirs. The man who remained in the cab was a constable in plain clothes.

"If you see us go up to the door," said the inspector to the constable, "bring the cab up quietly as soon as we enter the house."

"All right, sir."

Hadden and the inspector crossed to the opposite corner of Cambridge Street. The latter blew his whistle. Out from the shadow of the houses appeared a man in answer to the summons.

"He has come back, then?" said the inspector to this personage.

"Yes. Left Mavisbank at three, went to the office, came here at six, and hasn't gone out since," replied the man, briefly.

"Come with us."

The inspector, accompanied by Hadden and followed by his as-

sistant, advanced to the door of a quiet, genteel-looking house, and knocked.

The door was opened by the girl, Lizzie Dunn, who, on seeing the three men, stared as if she fancied there was something wrong. But she was reassured when Inspector Speirs asked, in a quiet, friendly way, if Mr. Tavendale happened to be at home. The girl supposed that the visitors were acquaintances of the lodger, although she had never seen them before, and answered promptly "that the gentleman was at home—would they step in?"

The inspector glanced towards the cab, to see if it were approaching, and then entered the lobby, followed by Hadden—who was apparently disposed to keep in the background in the event about to take place—and the constable.

The girl then desired to know what name she would mention.

"It's of no importance," said the inspector, nodding quite jocularly; "none in the least. Mr. Tavendale would not remember the name, it's such a long time since he heard it. Just say a friend."

The girl proceeded to Mr. Tavendale's chambers, and in a few minutes that gentleman appeared in the lobby.

Alick Tavendale's ordinary manner was that of easy good-nature. Until within the last few days he had scarcely ever displayed the least excitability. He was apparently possessed of a large faith in the ultimate good of life, so that whenever anything went wrong he was not troubled or worried by the misadventure. He simply lighted his cigar, smoked, and waited for fortune to put everything in order again, and allow the machine to go on with its work as usual. He was never impatient, because he was never in a hurry; he was never angry, because he had never found anything worth being angry about. Consequently he was liked by the household, liked by his companions, and pitied by some as a useless creature, who would never do anything good in the world.

His character had altered strangely during the past eight or ten days, for he had displayed bitter temper and irritable impatience. At present, when he appeared in the lobby, his tawny complexion was tinged with the pallor of anxiety, and his dark hazel eyes were bloodshot, as if he had slept little for several nights. Indeed, the expression of his countenance was, on the whole, indicative of troubled thought; and the thought which could have produced such a change in his character and habits must have been a very serious one.

He seemed to be astonished at the appearance of the visitors, with whom he was wholly unacquainted.

"Did you desire to see me, gentlemen?" he said, politely enough, although he was not pleased by the prospect of an interview with entire strangers.

"You are Mr. Tavendale?" rejoined the inspector.

"Yes."

The inspector respectfully laid his hand on the gentleman's arm.

"I am sorry, sir, to trouble you, but, in the name of the law, you are our prisoner."

"Prisoner!" cried Tavendale, thunderstricken, and staring wildly at the men.

Hadden watched his face narrowly.

Recovering his breath, the prisoner stammered excitedly,

"This is extraordinary! Of what am I accused? Why am I arrested?"

"You are arrested, sir, on account of the unhappy affair of Monday night."

"Monday night!" exclaimed the prisoner, more startled than before, and in a low voice; "then I am lost!"

These unhappy words were heard by the three men, and made a deep impression upon them. The inspector heard a cab stop at the door outside at the moment he presented the warrant to Tavendale.

The latter perused it hastily, uttering exclamations of astonishment and alarm while he read.

"This is nonsense," he said, hoarsely, when he had finished; "I do not see how you can associate me with this horrible crime—"

"You have read the warrant, sir," interrupted Speirs, "and we must obey it."

Tavendale made no response; he seemed to be overwhelmed by the accusation; but he rapidly recovered his self-possession, as he reflected upon the unpleasant position in which he was placed.

Hadden could not help pitying the man; but that significant exclamation—"Monday night! then I am lost!"—left no doubt, if there had been any pending in his mind, that the murderer was in their hands. In the suddenness of the arrest the truth had been pressed from him; and, however he might afterwards strive to explain his words, they stood recorded against him, to his confusion.

"Will you please walk inside with us, Mr. Tavendale?" said Hadden, opening the door of Tavendale's parlor. "We must search your chambers before we leave. Anything we may find compromising you we will use in evidence; but we warn you not to make any statement about them, for whatever you say will be brought against you."

"I thank you, sir," Tavendale replied; "but your warning is needless. I have already determined to remain silent until a proper time for speaking arrives. You do your duty. I shall not give you any trouble."

"A very sensible decision," commented the inspector; "a very sensible decision. Go on, Jock."

Hadden entered the sitting-room, followed by Tavendale, with Inspector Speirs and the constable.

Looking around, the chambers showed every sign of being the abode of a bachelor. On the walls were a number of pictures, framed and unframed, most of them having for subject a sporting scene. Others were of the highly poetical kind—representations of ideal beauties which young men so much affect. Hung between the pictures were articles of a most miscellaneous kind. Here was a riding-whip, tossed carelessly on a peg; there, a fancy hat, which had been bought in a hurry and as hurriedly cast away; there was a pair of boxing-gloves hanging by the thumbs; there were a variety of foils and fencing-masks, which at once reminded Hadden of the instrument with which he supposed the crime to have been committed.

On the floor was a litter of all sorts of things which it might be imagined likely for a young, careless, and fortunate bachelor to possess. Prints of all kinds—good and bad; books of the same description, shut and open, piled on top of each other in miniature stacks, or scattered singly, where their owner had dropped them after a glance at their contents.

In addition to the bachelor-like appearance of everything, there was over all a certain grotesqueness of aspect which gave a character to the place not always to be found in such quarters.

“Just a bachelor’s den,” muttered Hadden to himself as he entered; “and just the kind of place to pick up a little more evidence in. That litter on the floor contains another link in our chain.”

He put forward his hand as he spoke and touched several articles on the wall, moved the pictures outward and looked behind them, felt the fingers of the gloves, seriously examined the fencing-masks, and reached down one of the foils from its peg.

“Very pretty things to play with, I doubt not,” he muttered; “but one of these would be dangerous if— Umph!”

Without finishing the sentence he ran his eyes down the blade as he spoke, rubbed the dust off it with his fingers, then set it back in its place.

“That, at any rate, won’t tell us much,” he said, and moved on a step. “But here now—what is this? A foil broken. And where is the part broken off?”

The object of these questions was a foil similar to the one already examined, but with this difference in condition—about one-third of its length was broken off, and the broken part was nowhere to be found.

Hadden searched all round the room, and could not find it.

“I neither know how it has been broken nor where the broken part may be found,” said Tavendale, hurriedly.

With a strange look at the broken instrument, but without any

observation on the prisoner's statement, Hadden set it aside carefully, and went on with his examination.

He lifted the books from the floor and the chairs, caught them by the backs, and shook them edges downwards, so that anything inside might drop out. If by chance a piece of paper fluttered to the floor, he caught it up, and scanned it eagerly.

"You will pardon me," he said, turning to Tavendale, after having done this for the third or fourth time. "It is our business to find out secrets, but not to reveal any, except those which are needed. Anything I find not touching the matter in hand will be as safe with me as if it had never reached my eyes."

"I have no doubt, sir. I do not object to the search, or to your manner of conducting it. Pray go on."

Hadden looked at the speaker sharply, as if something peculiar had occurred to him; then he turned to his work and went on.

But his labor among the books was to small purpose; no further link in the chain rewarded him. He steadily, however, continued the search, turning next to a heap of papers and periodicals, which were piled upon, and almost bore down, a little side-table.

"This is better," he thought, as he turned up one or two odd things, which seemed of no avail, except that they pointed to something else behind. Then, brightening up suddenly: "Ha! here is something! I will take particular care of this."

He pulled a pair of gray kid gloves from between the pages of a copy of the *Daily Mail* as he spoke, and, looking at them for a moment, rolled them up carefully, and placed them beside the broken foil. They were soiled a good deal, and torn a little, but Hadden seemed to prize them all the more on that account. The gloves and the foil he now gave in charge to the inspector.

Hadden next led the way to the second apartment, which, being Tavendale's reception-room for visitors, was in much better order than the one they had just quitted. This rendered the vigilant search of the detective more easy and rapid. The result was not entirely barren. On the mantelpiece were several pipes—meerschaum, briar-root, and clay—also three cigar mouth-pieces. In one of the presses of the side-table was found a box of Havana cigars.

Nothing else was discovered there that could be associated with the business in hand by the wildest stretch of argument or imagination.

They entered the bedroom, and as they crossed the lobby, Mrs. Marshall, pale with fright and horror, her son, undaunted by the presence of officials, and Lizzie Dunn, in open-mouthed bewilderment, appeared at the farther end.

Lizzie had heard the conversation between Tavendale and the others in the lobby. She had hastened to tell her mistress, and now, in the utmost consternation, they were watching the proceedings.

On entering the bedroom, Hadden began the search from the right-hand side of the door, and passed round, scrutinizing every article in the place minutely. Nothing escaped him; things that were most frankly revealed—and therefore, as one might have fancied, beyond suspicion—were submitted to as keen an inspection as things that were most hidden.

In the corner, beside the washstand, he found a slim silk umbrella, with a patent ferrule, the point of which bore the marks of having been pressed into muddy earth. Particles of clay, now dried white, were sticking to it.

From beneath the bed he dragged an old brown-leather portmanteau, which appeared to have performed many journeys, as its worn edges and the numerous railway labels pasted over it testified. A small brass plate on the side bore the name "A. Tavendale." It was locked.

"Have you the key, Mr. Tavendale?"

"No, I—" He checked himself and appeared to reflect; then, as if just remembering, "Yes, I left it on the dressing-table, and the girl told me she put it into one of the ornaments on the mantelpiece. I have not looked for it myself, but you will probably find it there."

He spoke as one under compulsion.

The key was found in the centre ornament; the portmanteau was opened, and various articles of apparel were turned out upon the floor. The last article produced was a bundle, which, on being unrolled, proved to be a black frockcoat, a light tweed vest, and trousers.

These clothes were quite damp, as if they had been wetted recently by heavy rain, or by being dipped in water, and had been rolled up without any attempt having been made to dry them. They were also somewhat soiled with mud, and the right knee of the trousers was torn.

Hadden uttered a significant "umph!" as he rolled the clothes up into a bundle again. Once more he dived beneath the bed, and this time reappeared with a pair of French-leather boots which appeared to have been damp, to have been placed at the fire to dry, and, not having been watched attentively enough, had been burned and shrivelled up.

Hadden produced a foot-rule from his pocket, measured the soles of the boots, and then, uttering another satisfied "umph!" placed the boots on the top of the bundle of clothes.

As he had proceeded in his search he had made a careful inventory in his notebook of every article of the slightest importance. He now closed the book, put it in his pocket, and rose to his feet.

"I've done," he said briskly; "we can go now. Dickson, you will take these articles with you."

Tavendale seemed to rouse suddenly to the consciousness that they were about to take him to jail.

"One minute, sir ; I—" he said huskily, "if it were possible, I wish—before you take me to—before you take me away"—he could not say "to jail"—"I wish you could allow me to go—or go with me, I mean—to Mavisbank. This matter should be explained to my uncle by myself. It is a horrible mistake under which you arrest me. You will soon, I know, recognize the error; but, if it were possible, I should like to see Mr. Cargill at once."

"Always the same cry—a mistake!" muttered Hadden.

"I'm sorry, sir, but our orders are strict," said the inspector, "and we must take you with us at once, without permitting you to hold communication with anybody."

"It is hard!" exclaimed the unfortunate prisoner, bitterly. "I am innocent, and you treat me as if I were already condemned. But I submit."

And, clinching his teeth together, he bowed his head on his breast. They conducted him to the cab. They spared him the indignity of handcuffs. He sat beside the inspector, and on the opposite seat were Hadden and the constable Dickson, with the bundle of articles taken from the lodgings. The constable who had remained with the cab mounted the box beside the driver, and in that manner the prisoner was conveyed to the jail.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S TACK.

LATER upon the same evening Captain Mactier, of the city police, walked rapidly through the busy streets in the direction of Port-Dundas.

Few who passed him, and merely saw a tall, thin man, with sharp, keen features, and bright, restless, scrutinizing eyes, would have guessed the singular cogitations which were at work within that active brain—a brain that many a time had laid open the secret springs which guided the little dramas that came within the constable's sphere of business.

A sharp, business-looking man he was, with his surtout buttoned tightly up to his neck, and a small cane in his hand. Who would have recognized in this active, bright, commonplace-looking man the avenger of blood?

Yet such was George Mactier at this moment; for he had never been crossed with a doubt as to his finally discovering the author of the horrible outrage at Port-Dundas.

Up through the steep, narrow, and dark streets he made his way to the canal.

Carefully, with those keen, watchful eyes of his, he ran over the size and appearance of the various craft before him.

"There are two," said he, "which resemble the description I have received; I have no alternative but to try the one which lies nearest me."

So the captain descended to the scow. There appeared to be but one man on board, and he was seated, almost at the bow, on some tarpaulin, smoking a short clay pipe. He was a thick-set man with a low forehead, bushy eyebrows and beard, deep-set, cunning eyes, and forbidding expression of face. He wore a loose jacket over a red flannel shirt; his trousers were rolled up above his boots; and his rather ill-favored countenance was partially shaded by a large sou'wester.

He looked angrily up as Mactier stepped on board.

"Down, Rat, down!" he cried to a mangy-looking dog which seemed inclined to fly at the stranger.

The dog slunk away, growling, into the after-part of the boat, and its master once more turned his attention to the stranger.

"Well, mate?" he said, in a surly tone.

Mactier coolly went up to a small barrel which stood opposite the man, and seated himself thereon.

"I've come to have a talk with you, Mr. Little," he said.

"How d'ye know my name's Little?" asked the other, quickly.

Mactier, of course, did not know that he had at length got the right man until this answer assured him of the fact. It required all his self-command to prevent a look of triumph entering into his eyes.

"Oh, I know it," said Mactier, carelessly.

"Very well then, and since you know it, what have you to say to me?"

"I have got to ask you a few questions, that is all," said Mactier, "and you needn't alarm yourself."

"Alarm myself?" said Little, with a shrug. "I'll alarm myself about nothing. But I'd like to know by what right you come aboard this scow and ax me questions."

Mactier paid no attention to this defiant remark.

"You remember being over at Port-Dundas on Monday last, do you not?" he asked.

The man jumped to his feet and uttered a savage oath.

"Do you mean to accuse me o' that business?" he cried, almost choking with passion; "for if you do, it isn't your black coat and your polished boots as 'll prevent me pitchin' you into the water there!"

"My good man," said Mactier, quietly, "don't make a fool of yourself. I don't accuse you or anybody else of the affair. I merely want to ask you some questions in the interests of justice."

"Well, well," said the man, gloomily, resuming his seat, "don't you accuse me o' the affair, that's all I say to you."

"Now tell me," continued Mactier, "you had a man in the boat that day, had you not?"

Bob Little looked at his companion suspiciously and closely.

"What do you mean by that question?" he asked.

"Come, come," said Mactier, "what's the use of beating about the bush? You know there was a man in the boat, and I can prove it. Why do you seek to deny it?"

"I don't deny it," he said at length, but with evident reluctance.

"There was a man with you—that's settled; indeed, everybody in Port-Dundas knows it. Very well; was he dark or fair?"

"Fair."

"You know him?"

Little was evidently unwilling to compromise himself; but the confident tone of calm authority in which Mactier spoke had clearly impressed him. It is very unlikely that he would have answered at all had Mactier come to him insidiously, and begged for information as for a favor.

"Well, sir," he said, "I'd like to know what you're drivin' at. I tell you I saw the account of the affair in the papers—leastways, one o' my mates read it to me—and says I to myself, 'I'm glad I was in my boat on that day; they can't suspect me.'"

"We don't suspect you, or I should not be here questioning you."

"Then you're for the law, sir?" he asked, glancing cunningly at Mactier.

"Perhaps I am; but I warn you that your safest plan is to state everything you know about it. Innocent people have often got themselves into trouble by being shy to tell tales of their friends or neighbors; and I would advise you, as a friend, to clear yourself of all possibility of suspicion by simply stating everything you know of the business that took that man to Port-Dundas on Monday. You know him, you say—"

"I didn't say it," said the man, cautiously; "but I don't mind tellin' you that I do know him."

"His name, then?"

"His name is Samuel Phillips."

"What is his business?"

"He's a sailor."

"Oh, then, it is he who wears the large earrings?"

"How do you know that?" Little asked, exhibiting the greatest possible alarm.

"Oh, we know a good deal about the affair," said Mactier, smiling; "but we want to know more. He had a gray jacket, had he not? and he had a blue-and-white checked handkerchief?"

Little was evidently agitated. The fact was, he had, out of mere cunning and aversion, given a false name to Mactier, and it now seemed to him that the captain knew everything about the man whom he had called Phillips, and that he (Little) would get into trouble through his duplicity. But, with the obstinacy of his dogged nature, he refused to confess.

"Since you know so much about him, what's the use o' comin' to me?"

"Because I don't know enough. You say his name is Samuel Phillips, and that on Monday last he travelled with you in your boat from Carron. Where did you leave him?"

"At Maryhill."

"When?"

"On the same evening."

"Now, mind what you say, Bob Little, for this is a serious affair. Do you know where he is now?"

This was in reality the testing question which Mactier had come to put; he held up his finger warningly, touching his lips with the leaden knob of his harmless-looking but deadly cane, while anxiously he waited for the reply which would fall from the man's lips.

"I do know," said Little, with a dogged decision; "he is in Liverpool, and he'll sail to-morrow morning, or the next day, for Australia."

Certainly this news was sufficient to awaken all Mactier's energy and eagerness.

"In what ship?"

"The *Queen Adelaide*, I think, but I'm not sure on the name. However, you'll easily get him, if you want him; but I tell you he had no more hand in that business than I had."

"We shall see about that," said Mactier, reflectively; "and meanwhile there is not a moment to be lost."

He turned to Little.

"Now," said he, "you must take care not to breathe a syllable to a human being of what we two have been talking about. You have been of great service to me, and I shall not forget you. Will you come and have a dram now?"

"I can't very well leave the boat, sir," said Little; "but if you'll give me something to drink your honor's health with—"

Mactier gave him a half-crown, and immediately went to prepare for his journey to Liverpool, not very sure how much to believe of what the surly, suspicious boatman had told him.

He went round by the police-station, and, finding Inspector Speirs

there, learned from him all that had occurred during his absence. The rapid strides Hadden had made astonished him; but after the whole matter had been explained, with the circumstance of Taven-dale's arrest, he simply shrugged his shoulders, and remarked dryly—not without a shade of envy, for he was really impressed by what he heard—

“Sly Jock will prove too sly for his own good some day. Good-night; I'll be back the day after to-morrow, I expect, and then we'll see who has got the right end of the stick.”

“Dogged as ever,” thought the inspector, as his chief departed on his important mission.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT CAN IT MEAN?

EARLY on the following morning (Saturday) all the witnesses who were known or supposed to be able to give any information in regard to the Port-Dundas mystery were summoned to appear at the chambers of the sheriff, Mr. Lyon, on Monday. There was to be precognition of witnesses, and Robert Cargill, the millionaire, and his daughter Katherine, were summoned among the rest. The summons was the first intimation Mr. Cargill received of his nephew's position, and when it arrived he was still in the breakfast-room with Kate.

Neither father nor daughter had again referred to the unpleasant subject of the previous day's conversation; but each was conscious that it was uppermost in the other's thoughts. Kate was pale, silent, and sad; her father was irritable to a degree, and he seemed to have aged more during the past night than he had done during the last ten years.

His hair had grown white, his features pinched, and the lines under his eyes and about his mouth had become deeper and darker. He started with an expression of alarm even before he had touched the blue, legal-looking document which the attendant presented to him on a silver salver.

Controlling himself, however, he took the paper and opened it. On doing so, the summons for Kate dropped out. The attendant picked it up, and presented it to his master.

All the strength of his proud nature was required at the moment he rapidly perused the document to keep down the exclamations which rose in his throat. But he succeeded so far as to display no other sign of emotion than a nervous spasm of the thin lips.

With his hand he signalled the attendant to withdraw; and, when

the man had gone, the millionaire, clutching the paper, spasmodically, sunk on a chair, covering his face with his hand.

Kate had been standing near the window, apparently gazing out on the garden terrace; but in truth she had been observing her father. Instinct, or the result of the strong grasp the subject had obtained on her mind, led her to associate her father's present agitation with the revelation of Sarah Burnett.

Bowed down in the shame of his sin, the great man was a spectacle so pitiable to her that her heart yearned over him, and she felt as if at that moment she revered him more than she had ever done, although she was doomed to suffer so cruelly for his guilt.

She wished to help him, she wished to soothe his pain; but she did not know how. At length, softly:

"Has anything happened—"

She was interrupted. The sound of her voice seemed to have startled him from a trance, and he rose hastily to his feet. Frowning, he paced the floor with quick, agitated steps.

She did not move from her position—she could not move, for his anger and emotion frightened her, and she watched him timidly.

"I told you that the woman, Jean Gorbal, was dead," he said, in a low, vehement tone, while he continued his promenade; "but I did not tell you that—she had been murdered!"

Startling as the revelation was to her in itself, something in his manner, something in his tone, sent an inexplicable thrill to her heart, and her eyes became fixed on his face.

"*Murdered!*"

Her lips formed the word, but her tongue uttered no sound. Her whole frame quivered under the terrible suspicion which flashed through her mind.

With a subdued scream she sprang away from the horrible thought, and clutched his arm desperately.

"What does it mean?" she gasped wildly.

His own agitation seemed for the moment to be quelled by hers, as the boom of cannon is drowned in the roll of thunder, for so much stronger, deeper, seemed the passion of the girl than that of the man.

"Why do you look so strangely at me, child?" he said sharply, and avoiding her eyes; then, with an apparent effort, meeting her gaze: "A man has been arrested, charged with the crime."

Her hands relaxed their grip slowly, her eyes drooped, and she drew a long breath, as of intense relief. She flushed, as if ashamed of the momentary suspicion which had forced itself upon her.

As if divining and pitying her thought, he took her hands and exclaimed:

"You are perplexed by my agitation, when only yesterday I seemed to be glad that—that"—he faltered a little, despite himself—

“that the woman was out of the way. But you have not asked me why I am agitated; you have not asked me who has been arrested.”

“It cannot be any friend of ours,” she said quickly, her thoughts darting from one terror to another.

“It is a near friend—Alick Tavendale.”

Staggering backward from him, she flung up her arms as if to shield herself from a blow.

It was the father's turn to gaze astounded at the daughter; but there was also in his gaze a curious expression of wrath at the confirmation of a suspicion long entertained.

As if she had been petrified by his announcement, she stood white and motionless, her eyes starting from her head. There was a stillness in the room, oppressive as the momentary pause of the storm just before it bursts.

A low, wailing, pitiable cry, like that of a child dying in acute pain, and she said, wringing her hands, swaying her body to and fro:

“Ah, why—why did I tell him?—why did I tell him? But he is innocent, he is innocent, and you must save him.”

The latter words were uttered in a fierce outburst of passionate conviction.

The father's brow was dark, and his tone harsh as he responded:

“What have you told him?”

“All—all! It was my duty. But he is innocent—INNOCENT, I say, and you must save him.”

“You have yourself condemned him.”

“I?—ah no, ah no! don't say that,” she cried, with pitiable sobs, and wringing her hands; “don't say that, for I am his wife, and I love him, and I had to tell him—my husband!”

“Your husband!” thundered the father; but his wrath was checked, for she had fallen forward on a couch, and blood was running from her mouth.

CHAPTER XV.

A WOMAN'S CONFESSION.

FURIOUS and astounded as he was by his daughter's confession, the spectacle of her prostration stifled the passionate words which had risen in the father's throat. A second he stood as one who is paralyzed at the moment when every nerve is strung to unnatural strength by frenzy. With hand half raised, as if he had been about to curse her, mouth partly open, and eyes starting from their sockets, he stood dumbly staring upon her as she lay helplessly moaning on the couch, with the red spots marking the cushion.

She had not fainted; she had been dazed, bewildered, overwhelmed by the distress of her position, and the necessity which called forth her confession; but she had not lost consciousness through it all. It would have been a glad relief to the poor girl if she had swooned; indeed, at the moment, in the bitterness of her heart, she prayed that she might die.

But she neither swooned nor died; and she lay so enfeebled by her cruel excitement that she had scarcely strength to move a limb; but all the while she was conscious that her father, dumb-stricken with indignation and scorn for her guilt, was gazing upon her, learning, as she fancied, to hate her.

The power of speech seemed to have left her, for although she longed to cry out to him to pity and forgive her, the tongue would not utter any sound, and the words faded in her brain unuttered.

Mr. Cargill started as one from a nightmare, with a half-suppressed cry on his lips. An expression of terror flitted across his visage, and he hastily rung the bell.

Instead of waiting until the servant entered the room, he hastened to the door, and passed out to the hall, as if to prevent the inquisitive eyes of the attendant observing the condition of Kate, and so providing matter for gossiping tongues.

When the door closed behind him Kate feebly attempted to rise; she thought he had gone away from her, unable to endure her presence, and she wanted to call him back. But she could scarcely move, and she could not speak at all.

She was relieved of this dread immediately. As soon as Mr. Cargill had directed one attendant to hasten in search of Dr. Lawson, the local surgeon, and another to send Miss Cargill's maid, Easton, he returned to his daughter.

Bending over her with his hard features fixed and expressionless, although pale and pinched-like, he wiped her lips with a handkerchief, and raised her to a sitting posture. Piteously the poor girl's eyes were raised to his face, as if to seek there some gleam of pardon or sympathy. But they found no response, not one ray of light to break the darkness that had fallen upon her; nothing to indicate in the faintest manner how he was to treat her, now that he knew her to be the wife of his ungrateful nephew—the wife of a man who was at that moment lying in jail under the most serious of all charges with which the law has to deal.

He observed her look, however, and spoke in a cold, unsympathetic tone :

“Do not say a word. I believe you have burst a blood-vessel, and speaking will only aggravate it. I can wait for whatever you may have to say. Obey, and be silent.”

Her head dropped on her breast as Easton presented herself. The

waiting-woman glanced quickly at the two figures, and a light in her eyes denoted that she, by the help of some previous acquaintance with Kate's affairs, had at once comprehended the nature of what had passed. But, like a discreet woman, she masked her knowledge under a show of the greatest alarm for her young mistress. She ran towards the couch, raising her arms, and apparently about to give vent to her feelings of alarm in an exclamation of some sort.

"Stop!" said Mr. Cargill, sternly, and the discreet woman stopped, holding her head down, as if ashamed of her want of self-control in the presence of a millionaire; but, at the same time, she was slyly glancing from father to daughter, in the effort to discover anything that might be amiss besides what she suspected.

"You are a sensible woman, Easton," said the great man, in his cold, hard voice.

"I hope so, sir," was the modest response.

"Then you will understand me when I tell you that I do not wish any more noise made about Miss Cargill's indisposition than is necessary. You know that I dislike fuss of any sort, and I dislike gossiping tongues still more."

"Yes, sir."

"Your mistress has got a slight cold, and I have commanded her to retire to her chamber, and there wait the arrival of the doctor. Miss Cargill is not seriously ill, you understand, only weak."

"I understand, sir."

"I trust that I may find you do. Come, Kate, are you able to walk with my assistance?"

He placed his arm round her waist, and raised her to her feet. She leaned heavily upon him, and without his support she seemed unable to stand.

"Can you walk as far as your room?" he asked.

An effort to do so was the only answer. With her father's help on one side, and Easton's on the other, she succeeded in keeping her feet as far as her own chamber. Then Mr. Cargill quitted her, and Easton rapidly disrobed her, and helped her into bed.

Kate had not uttered any word yet; and Easton murmured to herself innumerable little exclamations of commiseration, in the hope of being able to obtain speech from her mistress, and by that means restore a little of the animation she had apparently lost entirely, and gratify her own curiosity at the same time.

But all her efforts were in vain; an occasional low, heart-bursting sob was the only sound to which Kate gave vent. When she lay down in bed it was with the helpless submission of a child so weak that no movement of its own will was possible.

Easton bustled about the apartment, arranging everything for the reception of the doctor, and muttering all the while to herself.

Dr. Lawson arrived. He was a little, stout man, with a round, healthful, smiling countenance. He had been on various occasions summoned to Mavisbank, and, although not yet acknowledged the family physician, he counted upon obtaining that desirable position in the household of the millionaire by zeal and "strict attention to business."

He was a good-natured little man, however, and, under any circumstances, would have been just as attentive to a patient so interesting as the pale bonny Katie as he was now, with the large prospect referred to before him.

He looked somewhat grave for the first few seconds, but brightened as he proceeded in his examination, and, conversing cheerily with the patient, or rather to her, for he would not allow her to attempt to speak, he proceeded with the various arrangements requisite to stop the bleeding, and that he effected before he left her.

A brief conversation with Easton enabled him to understand enough for his purpose; and after an hour had elapsed he gave the woman certain instructions, which she was to observe carefully till he returned in the evening. Then he proceeded down-stairs, and on his way a domestic stopped him, and informed him that Mr. Cargill desired his presence for a few moments.

Mr. Cargill was pacing the floor, with hands clasped tightly behind him, when the doctor was shown into the room. He received him in a cold, stately fashion, and immediately desired to know the true condition of the patient.

"Some small blood-vessel given way, sir," replied the doctor quietly; "but as the bleeding has ceased there is no danger, unless—"

"Well, sir, proceed."

"Unless anything should arise to cause excessive mental excitement, when I should say there would be very great danger to the patient's life."

Mr. Cargill's thin lips moved spasmodically, and he made half a dozen short, quick steps towards the window before speaking. Then, without raising his head or lifting his eyes from the floor:

"Suppose it is necessary that she should be required to give an explanation of certain private matters of importance to herself and to me, when—on what day, at what hour—will she be strong enough for one to venture to speak with her on such matters?"

"You may venture, sir, at any moment, but for the result I cannot be answerable."

"Is she so very weak?"

"She has been for the last ten days, or more, rapidly sinking into a hopeless state of debility, as a consequence of excessive mental anxiety."

"Thank you. I will leave her in your hands."

The doctor bowed and retired.

Mr. Cargill did not quit the house that day, or the next. He remained in the library alone, perturbed and almost despairing; but in the presence of any one, cold, hard, and indifferent. Easton visited him every hour with intelligence of the progress of the patient. On Sunday evening the doctor himself said that she had improved so rapidly that he was quite amazed. He could not say that he was satisfied, for he was afraid that the improvement was only apparent, and produced by nervous eagerness concerning something about to happen.

The millionaire shrank from these words, for they reminded him of what was about to happen. To-morrow Alick Tavendale was to be examined before the sheriff, and all the long-concealed sin was to be raked out of the past, and exposed to the eyes of the world.

He remained in the study throughout the evening, and in the dark; for when the attendant had come to light the gas, he bade him, in a sharper tone than usual, to go away, and not disturb him again, unless the bell rang.

So up till eleven o'clock Mr. Cargill remained in the dark, communing with his own heart. What the proud man suffered, how the flesh was scourged and the spirit racked for the sin that had found him out, none might know; whatever happened, whatever the world might say, however much those whose smiles he valued—and they were not many—might scorn him, the pride of the man was strong enough to present a placid and unflinching surface.

The wound was deep, but the black cloth of respectability covered it from the eye, and none might gaze upon it.

That was evident when Easton tapped at the door, and, receiving a sharp permission to enter, presented herself, light in hand, as if she had been made aware, by some of the servants, that Mr. Cargill was in the dark.

His eyes wavered a little under the flash of the light; but, that over, he regarded her with his ordinary look of dignified reserve.

"Miss Cargill has sent me for you, sir," she said respectfully.

He started slightly, despite himself, and hesitated, as if doubtful whether to comply with the desire of Kate or not.

"Say I will be with her presently," he said, at length, rising slowly from his seat.

Easton hurried away with the message, and she was followed immediately by her master. She had scarcely arranged the pillows of the bed, so as to enable Kate to sit upright, when Mr. Cargill entered.

He motioned Easton to retire, and that worthy lady, much against her will, was compelled to obey.

Then he closed the door after her, bolted it, and drew the porce-

lain "lappet" over the keyhole, so that no prying eyes might see anything in the room. He advanced slowly to the bed, where Katie lay watching his singular movements.

She was quite calm now; no tears or sobs, only the sweet white face, worn and pinched as with years of suffering. A little flush of painful surprise at the appearance of her father was the only emotion she displayed. Otherwise she was calm as himself.

Her surprise was excited by observing that his hair had grown perfectly white since the previous day, and the lines about the mouth and eyes had deepened as with age.

He touched her brow with his lips, formally and coldly, to all outward seeming; but she felt his lips trembling on her brow, and she knew how much love there was for her under his stern exterior.

He stood erect before her, waiting for her to speak, the while his pale, sunken eyes narrowly scanned her features, to descry how much she had suffered.

"Turn the light away, papa," she said feebly; "it hurts my eyes."

Silently he complied, and resumed his place by her side, drawing the curtain round the bed so as still further to shield her from the light.

Her little hand crept into his, and her head was laid on his shoulder, just as she remembered doing—ay, he remembered it too—when she had been a child, and wholly unconscious of any austerity or coldness on his part. In that position, and with that memory, tears came very quietly to the relief of her parched eyes, and stealing softly down her cheeks, gave vent to the over-pent anguish of the girl's mind. And by and by, since he would not speak, she was obliged to begin herself.

"Are you very angry with me, papa?"

"Angry, my child?" he faltered huskily, for the man's wrath had cooled during the thirty hours or so which had elapsed since their previous conversation.

"You cannot help being angry," she said softly, but quite steadily, and her voice obtained even a degree of firmness as she proceeded. "And I deserve your anger. I deceived you—you, who had been always good and kind to me. I agreed to do that which I knew would vex you, and all because I was a weak, silly girl, who had not sufficient faith in your love to trust that you would do everything, consent to anything, that could make me happy."

"I have always tried to do that."

"I know it, dear father. And why do you not speak angrily to me, why do you not scold me, as you were going to do when I first told you?"

He made no answer.

"You are waiting until I am well enough to hear what you have to say—is not that why you are silent?" she went on.

"No, child, no!"

"What, then—have you already forgiven me? Have you already forgiven him?"

A pause; and then, while he laid his hand on her head, as if to make sure that she should not raise her eyes to his face:

"Tell me how it all happened."

"I—I don't know how it came about," she answered confusedly. "But, you know, Alick and I were often together; and he had no friends but us; and you were always so stern with him that I was sorry for him, and tried always to please him; and then I found that—that I cared a great deal for him, and I was frightened. Then we used to meet often in secret, so that the servants might not gossip about our—love."

"I see, I see; and you would not trust me?" muttered the old man, regretfully.

"It was Alick who was most afraid of you; for you know that you were never kind and gentle with him, as you have been with me—as you are now."

"But I have been a true friend to him, and grati— But go on, child, go on."

"He had learned by some means that you wished Mr. Lyon to become my husband. That drove him to desperation, and he pleaded with me to marry him secretly, so as to make him feel safe and happy, till he might obtain some means of proving to you that he was worthy to become your son."

"Ah!"

The ejaculation was that of one who obtains some striking confirmation of a conviction.

"When you went to London, three weeks ago, he urged me again to take this step. I did not think it necessary; only he was so unhappy when I asked him to let me speak to you, that I desisted for the time. Then came Sarah Burnett, and that was what caused me to agree to his proposal—"

"How was that—how was that?"

"Sarah's revelation dismayed me very much. You were away. I could not write to you about it. My heart grew sick when I touched a pen with the thought of writing to you. I had no friend to relieve me in such a moment; there was no one I could trust but—but the man who was to be my husband. I thought it necessary for him to know it; for I dared not become his wife until he understood my true position; so I told him all."

"Well—and he?"

"Proved himself all that I had believed him to be. He urged me,

with more earnestness than ever, to become his wife at once, without waiting to tell you—without hesitating to consider anything. I tried to show him how he might injure his own prospects by a union with one placed in such a sad position as myself. But he would listen to nothing, and at last I yielded ; for I love him, father, and I know that he is good and true.”

“Where were you married?” he asked.

“At the Victoria Hotel, by license.”

“Who were the witnesses?”

“Easton, and one of the waiters.”

“You have a certificate?”

“It is in my desk. The key is in the pocket of that dress hanging on the handle of the wardrobe.”

He went to the dress, procured the key, and, the desk having been brought into the bedroom by Katie since it had become the keeper of the precious document, her father in a few moments had the certificate in his hand.

He examined it minutely, and then carefully placed it in his pocket-book.

She had been watching his every movement with intense eagerness, trying to learn something of his thought from his visage ; and she failed. He advanced to her side again.

“Shall I tell you now why I am not angry with you, Katie?” he said, in a weary voice.

“Yes, if you will.”

He laid his hands on her head gently, and an expression of pain and sorrow now dawned in his eyes while he spoke :

“Because, my poor child, I have had time to think, and I know what a puny, worthless thing my wrath is in the face of that which you have to suffer. The punishment of my sin is hard to bear, but the punishment of yours comes more swiftly.”

“What is it you mean? Speak!”

He had hesitated, but he complied with her appeal.

“You love this man—you have secretly married him ; and, in doing so, you have supplied a motive for the crime with which he is charged.”

“But you—you,” she interrupted wildly, “you do not—you cannot—believe him guilty!”

“I know nothing. You have supplied a motive for the crime, which would have been wholly absent had he remained simply my dependent nephew ; but as the secret husband of my daughter, men will say that, to secure her position as my heiress, and to give himself a claim upon me, perhaps, he perpetrated this crime. Men will say that, and it will be hard to disprove it.”

“But it is false—false! Ah! father, can you believe *me* capable

of such a thing? Till you can believe that, trust me, he is guiltless as you are yourself."

"Heaven only knows the truth!" he replied, with a perceptible shudder.

"But you do not *doubt*?" she cried, almost with a shriek.

"I am not his judge."

A low, piteous moan, and she sank back on the pillows.

"I see now—I see now! I have ruined him—I who love him so!"

"Hush! hush! be calm! Mr. Lyon and the doctor will arrange so that you will not be required to attend the examination to-morrow."

"But I must go—I must save him!"

"What can be done for him I will do. Be silent—be hopeful, if you can. Good-night."

Again he touched her brow with his lips; but this time the austerity had faded from his manner, and he was gentle with her as a woman might have been.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN OBSTINATE CLIENT.

THE miserable fate of Jean Gorbai, the mystery in which the circumstances were shrouded, and the rumors which had spread like wildfire, involving certain persons of position and influence in the affair, had excited the curiosity and horror of the city, and especially of Port-Dundas, to an extraordinary degree.

Consequently, on Monday morning there was a crowd about the door of the sheriff's chambers at an early hour. The excitement of the mass which lingered about the doors was kept in bounds by the constables, who, however, had hard work to obtain a clear passage to the door for the various witnesses in the inquiry of the day. The crowd swayed and shouted, laughed and jested, as is the custom of crowds, even when the life of a fellow-creature is in peril.

The fiscal was engaged in earnest consultation with Sheriff Lyon.

Alick Tavendale was pale, but collected and firm. With as much ease as if he had been sitting in his own room, and no such serious question as the present, involving his life, was about to be raised, he conversed in an undertone with his agent, who spoke in a whisper, earnestly urging something upon him which he rejected.

Indeed, of the two, the agent looked most like the criminal, for he was nervously earnest. This, however, was attributable to the fact that he was a young man, and this was the first important case in which he had been engaged, so that it was of the utmost consequence

to his future prospects to bring off his client scathless, and he had taken great pains to obtain permission from the sheriff to be present at the examination.

Mr. Laurence Hewitt had been acquainted with the prisoner, and immediately on learning that he had been arrested on this grave charge he had hastened to him, and insisted upon being intrusted with the case. Tavendale had agreed to that, declaring at the same time that he was so confident his innocence would be apparent as soon as the inquiry had been opened that he had not intended to seek any legal aid.

Mr. Hewitt, however, was determined that he should have the utmost help the law could afford, and had already retained one of the leading counsel of the circuit on behalf of his friend. He set himself to work with unexampled zeal, and although he had as yet failed to obtain anything conclusive in favor of his client, that was because he had been allowed so little time, and because the prisoner himself afforded him scant assistance in his inquiries.

"For Heaven's sake," Mr. Hewitt was whispering now, eagerly, "be sensible at the last moment. Give me some means of proving where you were on the evening of the murder, for upon that everything will depend."

"I tell you there is no need," replied Tavendale, quietly and decisively. "I have reasons—serious reasons—for not wishing my whereabouts on that evening to be known. If you can't get on without that knowledge—well, then, you must throw up the case, and I will be as grateful to you as if you had carried it out."

"Are you mad?" muttered Hewitt, unable to conceal his annoyance at this obstinacy at such a moment.

"I hope not."

"Then do you not see that if I throw up the case it will be a direct acknowledgment on my part and yours of your guilt?"

Tavendale looked him straight in the face.

"Do you suspect me?" he asked, quietly; "for if you do, I would rather meet whatever danger there may be in your drawing off than have you go on."

"It is not my business to suspect; my business is to prove you innocent, or, at any rate, to prevent others proving you guilty; but I warn you that you are adding difficulties to a case which is difficult enough in itself."

"I can't help that; I will not say where I was on Monday evening."

With a dissatisfied expression, Mr. Hewitt turned to the table, and busied himself among the various documents which he produced from his green bag.

The case proceeded. The first testimony received was that of In-

spector Speirs and the constables, detailing in what manner the unfortunate woman Jean Gorbal had been found.

Then followed witnesses whose evidence tended to show that the prisoner had been seen entering the deceased's house on the Friday before the crime; and that he had been seen at Port-Dundas on the afternoon of the day of the murder.

Mrs. Marshall, Tavendale's landlady, and her servant, Lizzie Dunn, testified to the singular conduct of the prisoner during the three days preceding and the three days succeeding the date of the crime. They spoke with evident reluctance, and the landlady was even in tears; for the lodger had succeeded in obtaining the esteem of her household.

Inspector Speirs presented the various articles which had been found in Tavendale's apartments. The woman had been killed by being stabbed in the back with some three-cornered instrument like a foil. There was one of Tavendale's foils broken, and the pointed portion of it could not be found. Prisoner had declared that he had broken the foil accidentally one morning while bending it; he had laid the broken parts together on a side-table; he had not thought of it again until he saw it in the detective's hands, and then he could not think how the missing portion had disappeared, as everybody in the house declared they had not touched it.

Beneath the nails of deceased had been found certain particles of gray kid gloves. Here were a pair of gray kid gloves, scratched and torn, as if the person who had been wearing them had been engaged in a struggle with some one. They were the gloves of the accused.

From the garden of the house at Port-Dundas had been brought a clod of earth, in which was punctured a hole by the point of an umbrella having a patent ferrule. Here was the prisoner's umbrella, on the point of which still remained marks of earth. It had a patent ferrule, and it fitted the hole in the clod of earth exactly.

Again, a man's footprint had been measured in the garden, and, although the measurement might be considered defective, yet here were a pair of the prisoner's boots with which the measurement agreed to a quarter of an inch. These boots had been wet, and had shrunk while being dried at a fire.

As these striking items were one by one adduced, each seeming to point more distinctly than the other to the prisoner as the guilty one, Tavendale did not lose his presence of mind, although his agent winced inwardly, and held down his head over his papers. The accused remained calm as at first, although he became a shade paler.

The commotion outside was excessive, and was only subdued by the strenuous exertions of the constables. Distorted explanations passed rapidly from mouth to mouth, and many eyes were opened wide with horror at the atrocity of the prisoner, which was under-

stood by those impulsive judges to have been quite decided by the evidence of somebody.

In the lobby of the chambers excitement also prevailed. Witnesses who had yet to be called, and the officials, were loitering about, discussing the probabilities of the result of the present examination. The worst for the accused was anticipated.

But there was one who had only recently forced a way into the hall, who was silent, and kept apart from the rest. She had been closely veiled, but, having taken her position by a side door, when the murmur of the inspector's voice was first heard, she threw the veil back, in her eagerness to catch every sound that might in any way indicate how the investigation progressed.

The veil being raised revealed the white, distracted face of Kate Cargill.

Fevered, tortured, and bewildered by the thoughts which visited her as she had lain on her bed, with every nerve tense-strung with anticipations of the events of the day upon which her husband's life was staked, she had sprung with unnatural energy from her bed. Easton tried to persuade her to remain still, but in vain. Despite the doctor's warning, despite her father's commands, she would not, she could not, lie there, thinking of what was being done in the city, and make no effort to be near her husband in the hour of his trial.

Easton was a discreet person, and she saw that it was useless to attempt to stay her; so she ordered the brougham, and accompanied her mistress to the precincts of the chambers. Then Kate had jumped from the carriage, and, weak as she was, she made a way through the crowd and reached the lobby.

When she comprehended that the testimony was to the prisoner's disadvantage, she clutched the handle of the door feverishly for support while she bent her ear closer, with the feeble hope of discovering that she had been mistaken.

At that moment she heard the low, steady voice of Sarah Burnett.

"Miss Cargill—Kate—my sister! Why are you here? You are ill, and this agitation will kill you."

Half turning her face, and hastily motioning her away with her disengaged hand, Kate rejoined faintly.

"Don't speak—don't speak! Go away; you do not know how much I have at stake."

Sarah made a movement, as if about to draw her away from the place, when a policeman summoned her to the sheriff's presence.

She looked quickly round, as if the gruffness of the man's voice or the novelty of the position had alarmed her. Besides, she observed the quick glance of amaze and suspicion which Kate flashed upon her, and she hesitated to leave her sister in her present state

of anguish, with all the curious eyes of the loungers in the lobby fixed upon her.

A second time her name was called.

“For pity’s sake, Miss Cargill, come away from this place!” she said hurriedly, seizing her hand, as if to drag her away; “at least retire to some place where your agitation may be unobserved.”

Kate snatched her hand from Sarah’s grasp, and hastily re-covered her face with the veil, but without moving from the spot.

“It is my husband’s life that is at stake. Would you have me hide in some corner while they are murdering him?” she said fiercely.

“Your husband!” exclaimed Sarah, drawing back.

“Ay—my husband.”

A third time Sarah’s name was called, and she could not now delay to express sympathy or surprise. Agitated and confused, she entered and took her place in front of the large table.

Kate, in the great agony of suspense, was wholly unconscious of the curious eyes which rested upon her—pityingly, to be sure, for even those most accustomed to such scenes could not look upon that fair young face, with its pallid terror, and not feel the heartstrings tighten and the breath come quickly.

She did not see them, she did not hear their whisperings; she was sensible of nothing save the subdued murmur of voices which reached her ears from the interior of the chamber, as the low plashing of waves on a shingly beach afar off. Once, twice, and again she thought of entering, and only the sense of her own utter weakness checked her, and kept her in the lobby.

She knew that she could not look upon her husband, standing there before the man upon whose words his life, as she thought, depended, with the eyes of the people turned upon him as a criminal, and preserve the little strength she had left. No; she must husband that strength to learn his fate. And so she remained there, clutching at the door-handle for support—listening, listening, with every nerve tense-strung.

CHAPTER XVII.

SARAH’S EVIDENCE.

THE eyes of the sheriff and the fiscal were turned to Sarah, who now stood with head bowed meekly, and hands clasped tightly, as one waiting submissively to undergo an ordeal. She had not looked at the prisoner; the information she had just received from Kate seemed to have impressed her with the dread that what she would

have to say might in some fatal manner influence the fate of her sister's husband.

She was examined by the fiscal.

"You knew the deceased, Jean Gorbai?"

"Yes, she was my nurse, but during the last two years I saw her very seldom."

"Why was that?"

"She was addicted to drink, and every time she saw my mother she caused her agitation, and more than once made her very ill for several days after an interview."

"What was the subject of these interviews?"

Sarah was evidently agitated by the question, as if she felt that they were approaching the unhappy family secret.

"Go on, Miss Burnett," said Sheriff Lyon, encouragingly.

"I was not allowed to be present at their interviews, and all I heard was merely a portion of the conversation when I was leaving the room or returning to it," she responded feelingly.

"Well, what did the conversation, so far as you heard, seem to concern?" queried the fiscal.

"Money at times, and at other times it related to a family matter, with which Jean Gorbai, as my nurse, was associated."

"Speak a little louder, if you please; and now tell us, do you know what that family matter was? Do not hesitate to answer. We would not press this question were it not that we believe the answer will enable us to see what was the character of the deceased's private life, and who were her friends. Do you know what this matter was?"

"I do."

Her voice was not raised above a whisper, but the sound was distinctly audible in the stillness which prevailed.

"Tell us what it was, then."

Sarah raised her handkerchief to her lips, as if to hide her nervous quivering, and bowed her head lower than before to conceal the crimson shame which overspread her features.

Mr. Hewitt, who had not hitherto by the slightest movement recognized her, turned his head quickly, as if to see the cause of her silence. As quickly he resumed his former position, intent upon the various documents which lay before him, and the memoranda he was making of the evidence.

"Must I tell it all?" said Sarah, glancing appealingly to Mr. Lyon.

"It is necessary," said the latter, kindly, and sympathizing with the distress of the witness, for he was already acquainted with the miserable story she was required to repeat. "Remember, Miss Burnett, that at this moment, when a human life is at stake, this is no time

for reservation of any kind, however delicate may be the subject, or however painful it may be to you to refer to it."

"It is not of myself I am thinking, sir," she said earnestly; "if only myself were concerned I would not hesitate a moment to speak; but the honor and the good name of those whom I love and respect are involved, and I cannot readily bring myself to expose them."

"Justice to the prisoner, Miss Burnett, demands that we should know everything connected with the deceased."

The sheriff, commiserating the unhappy position of the young girl, who was thus called upon to give the particulars of an affair the shame of which she felt as her own, although she was really blameless in the matter, whispered to the fiscal, and the latter, with a grave movement of his head, indicative of assent, said, "Where is Mrs. Burnett?"

"She is not here, sir," replied Sarah, gradually obtaining a control over her emotion.

"How is that? She received a summons."

"Yes, sir; but she is ill."

"Dangerously?"

"So dangerously, sir, that the doctor, whom I left with her till my return, fears that she may not survive twelve hours longer. Her mind and body are in a state of collapse, so that she can neither speak nor move. Here is the medical certificate, sir, showing that to remove her from the house would be to kill her, and that to attempt to obtain any evidence from her would be useless, as she is incapable of speech, even if she could understand the questions."

"Was the attack sudden?"

"Very sudden."

"When did it occur?"

"On the afternoon of the day on which the murder of Jean Gorbai was discovered."

"Pray calm yourself, Miss Burnett," said Sheriff Lyon, gently, seeing that her emotion was again likely to overcome her. "You will tell us now whether this illness had anything to do with the discovery of the crime?"

"I believe it had, sir, for it was just after dinner, when Mrs. Burnett took up the afternoon edition of the paper. I was in another part of the house, but I ran to the parlor on hearing a loud scream. I found Mrs. Burnett lying on the floor as I entered the room, and she moaned in such a way that I thought she was choking. I heard what she was saying, however, distinctly. She was saying—'Oh, miserable, wretched—wretched woman!'"

"Meaning Jean Gorbai?"

"Perhaps so, sir; but I do not think the exclamation referred to her."

Mr. Lyon felt his heart bound to his throat, as Sarah, with quiet

simplicity, made this response, for the white face of Katie presented itself to his mind.

"Did you ask the meaning of her words?"

"I was too much agitated at the moment to think of anything else than of helping her. With the assistance of the servant I carried her to the bedroom. In her delirium she has repeatedly spoken of my poor nurse, but she has said nothing coherently, and for the last two days she has not spoken at all. The doctor says she is sinking."

"Well, then, in her delirium, or at any other time, has she ever said anything, or hinted anything, that would lead you to suppose that Jean Gorbai had enemies?"

"No, I cannot remember ever hearing anything of the kind."

This answer was given with apparent constraint, as if the witness were balancing the words, uncertain of their truth.

"Has she ever hinted, or do you know from any source, that there was any person interested in the death of your nurse?"

"No—I— Ah, sir, spare me!"

Sarah shaded her eyes with her hand, while her breast moved with suppressed sobs.

Once again Mr. Hewitt turned his head quickly towards the witness, and as quickly resumed his former position. It was a mere cursory glance, as if, in the interests of his client, to see how far the manner of the witness corroborated the words.

"You must answer the question, Miss Burnett," said the sheriff, firmly; resolute to remember his duty as a magistrate, however much his own private feelings might be lacerated.

Sarah removed her hand from her eyes, which were quite dry, although bright as polished steel. Her features, too, were set as hard as a mould of steel. She was perfectly calm now—perfectly quiet and firm. She saw, apparently, that evasion was worse than useless, for it might harm rather than help the cause of Katie's husband. The time had come for speech, and however much pain she might endure while thus publicly proclaiming her father's, her sister's, and her own shame, she would hesitate no longer.

"I do not know any one who may have been interested in her death, but I do know that her untimely end has been the source of much trouble to me and mine."

"You will explain that."

She bowed her head in token of assent; and then, in a clear, low voice, and with the utmost lucidity of manner, she repeated the narrative she had already given to John Hadden, and which had enabled the detective to complete the links of the chain of evidence implicating the prisoner. Her discovery of the letters and the revelation of their contents produced a profound sensation on those

present, which was heightened when, at the proper moment, Sarah produced the documents from her pocket, stating that she had brought them with her, anticipating that she might be compelled to show them, and explain their nature.

Like a flash, suspicion was transferred from the prisoner to no less a personage than the millionaire himself.

Sarah was permitted to stand aside. She had passed through the ordeal of the examination and exposure bravely enough; but now that her attention was no longer fixed upon the sheriff or the fiscal, she became acutely sensitive to the curiosity she had excited in those around her.

She shrank from their gaze, but she was so faint that she had to take a seat. A thrill passed over her form when she heard the clerk call Mr. Robert Cargill, and the constable at the door repeat the name.

“Courage, Sarah, my lass! it will soon be over.”

The words were whispered in her ear by the kindly voice of John Hadden. Without raising her head she extended her hand to him.

“Oh, how can I live,” she murmured sobbingly, “and all the world made aware of my shame!”

“Hush! nobody will blame you, lass, for what you had no hand in—nobody is going to blame you for being born.”

“It’s not myself I’m thinking about. I saw Katie outside there, and my heart aches for her, she looked so worn and distracted; and I feel as if I would go mad when I think of what I have said and done.”

“You could not help it, my lass. You must have your rights, and justice must have her rights; and I saw how hard it was for you to speak out, although all the shame lay on others, not on you. But you will forget all that when you are installed in your true position as the lady of Mavisbank House.”

She interrupted him by clutching his arm spasmodically.

“I will never obtain that position; I will never accept it unless that man is saved.”

“Who is it you mean—Tavendale?”

“Yes—him.”

“You cannot wish a criminal to escape?”

“No, no; but is he the criminal?”

“We are trying to find that out.”

“No matter; guilty or not guilty, his condemnation will drive me—I don’t know what I will do. I cannot bear to think of it, for it will kill poor Katie—she who is so good and generous.”

“And why should it kill her?” asked Hadden, smiling, and trying to relieve her gloom.

“Why?” she said, in a subdued tone, and with the air of one who

is utterly distracted by her own position. "Because I have been one of the main causes of the crime, and because he is her husband."

"Eh?—what?"

Hadden bent down, drew her hand from her face, and peered inquisitively into it, with an expression of puzzled astonishment on his own.

"He—Alick Tavendale, the prisoner—is the husband of Katie, my sister," she replied, still speaking below her breath and meeting his gaze fixedly.

"Who told you that?"

"Herself—just now."

Hadden dropped her hands, raised himself, and stood with head bent, and his right hand extended, as if about to take a pinch of snuff from some invisible snuff-box.

As a general buzz in the chamber intimated the entrance of Mr. Cargill, Hadden started from his reverie. He whispered to Sarah to remain there until he returned, and then he slipped away.

He despatched a man immediately on a pressing mission to the office of the registrar of births, deaths, and marriages.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MILLIONAIRE'S CONFESSION.

MR. CARGILL leaned heavily upon his gold-headed staff as he took his place. Those who had seen him only three days ago, and even those who had personal acquaintance with him, would have been startled by the transformation the man had undergone. Indeed, if twenty years had elapsed since Friday, and every year had heaped new misfortune upon him, the change could not have been more marked and terrible.

The form which had been held erect was bent and shrunken; the head which had been raised so high was bowed on his breast; the eyes which had been so sharp and haughty were dull and sunken. In every lineament was stamped humiliation and shame.

The millionaire, proud and austere in the consciousness of his wealth, position, and power, had become a weak, broken-down old man, verging upon his dotage. It was a pitiable spectacle the great man presented, fallen from his height of pride and grandeur.

In commiseration for his unhappy position and his evident bodily weakness he was allowed to sit during the examination.

His voice was feeble and unsteady as he thanked the sheriff for the consideration shown to him, and professed himself ready to give any information in his power that might be required of him.

The chief object to be gained in examining Mr. Cargill was the knowledge of the true position the prisoner had occupied in his confidence, so as to detect how far the peculiar circumstances in which the witness was involved had supplied a motive for the assassination of Jean Gorbal. To this end it was necessary to obtain from him a confirmation of Sarah's narrative. He corroborated every detail and supplied others. Although he spoke in a feeble, sickly manner, he made no effort to conceal anything. He seemed to have come there with the determination to lay bare the innermost recesses of his heart, the profoundest secrets of his life.

His marriage with Katie Douglas had been forced upon him by his father. He did not seek to defend in any way the miserable weakness and baseness of which he had been guilty in marrying the lady while his whole thought and feeling were bound up in another. He only said that he had submitted to his father's will because he had seen that there was no other means of saving his house from utter ruin than by this union.

"She was a good and true wife to a false and indifferent husband," he said, in a stifling voice; "and I think her goodness and the affection she gave me, acting upon my own sense of my unworthiness, made me dislike her all the more; for, like most other people, I might have forgiven an offence committed against myself, but I could not forgive the daily smarts her fidelity caused me in daily reminding me of my own baseness.

"The fact that Mrs. Burnett and my wife were about to become mothers about the same time suggested the wretched trick of exchanging the children, so that the offspring of the woman I loved might inherit the fortune which my wife's dowry had enabled me to realize. The woman Jean Gorbal had worked in one of our factories, and on more than one occasion I had saved her from being discharged, on account of her propensity for drink and neglect of her work. This rendered her, as she repeatedly declared, devoted to my interests, and ready to serve me at any time and in any way.

"At length she was discharged, and she went back to her native place, Greenock, where she got married; but the moment I acquainted her that I wanted her help she came to me. She was quick and cunning, and undertook to carry out my wishes in every particular, in consideration of an annual allowance. She came to London, as I directed her, but, much to my chagrin, she brought with her her husband. She told me she had not been able to avoid that, as Gorbal, who was a seaman, was of a jealous disposition, and would scarcely trust her out of his sight. She assured me, however, that he was safe as herself; and as he was a silent, taciturn man, who made no attempt to interfere with our arrangements, further than by his insisting upon being a party to them, my objections to his

presence were overcome, and he remained with his wife at Morley's Hotel until the event transpired."

"The exchange of children was effected, then?"

"Yes, it was; the plan proved completely successful. Everything occurred as we had hoped and anticipated, and before the children were a week old the exchange was effected, by the agency of Dr. Largie, Jean Gorbai, and her husband. The arrangement was that I should send my wife's nurse from the room, and, while she was away, the doctor carried the infant to the anteroom. There Jean was to be in waiting with Mrs. Burnett's infant, and as the clothes for both children had been prepared of exactly similar shape and color, there was to be nothing to do but exchange. I heard the doctor speaking, and, afraid that he might waken Mrs. Cargill, I went to the door, to warn him to lower his voice. I heard him saying, 'You should have brought it at once, as I told you.' Jean Gorbai answered him, as I thought, sulkily: 'I thought better of it—the child might have cried, or made a row, while I was waiting, and that would have spoiled the business. I can go to the room in a minute, and if anybody sees me they'll think it's my own mistress's child I've got. Then I'll leave this one there, and bring the other back. If anybody sees, they won't see anything out of the ordinary.' She took the child away, and the doctor went with her. When he came back, he asked if Mrs. Cargill was sleeping. I answered, 'Yes;' and cautioned him not to speak so loud. While I was speaking, the door of the anteroom opened, and Jean Gorbai entered with Mrs. Burnett's child. The clothes had been so carefully arranged that, although the doctor and I were aware of the deception, we could scarcely detect any difference, and, for a minute, we could scarcely believe that this was not the same child which had just been taken away.

"Jean had left the door open, and we heard the cries of the child coming from Mrs. Burnett's apartment. The doctor sent her back immediately to still its cries, and, taking the infant she carried, he returned to Mrs. Cargill's room, and placed it in the crib from which my wife's daughter had been lifted a few moments previously. He left the room for a time, and during his absence my wife awakened.

"She took the child in her arms and fondled it, without the slightest suspicion of the treachery that had been at work during her sleep.

"When the doctor came back he looked pale, and exceedingly anxious. When I spoke to him in private, he told me he did not like the work I had forced him to do; that nothing, save the obligations he was under to me, would have tempted him to do it; and hoped that I was satisfied.

"Ten years ago my wife died. Up to the last she had no sus-

picion that the child she had cared for so fondly, and had loved so tenderly—all the more tenderly because she felt herself to be an unloved wife—was not her own. Up to the last she was good and affectionate to me, and never breathed one word of reproach. She told me, at last, that she had for some time known of my association with her former governess; and with the words of forgiveness on her lips she died.”

The old man’s voice had become almost inaudible; it seemed as if the memory of the good woman, towards whom he had acted so basely, overwhelmed him, and compelled him to pause for breath.

“That memory,” he went on, in a quavering voice, “was the sharpest of all the stings my own acts had formed to torture me and render my life miserable, while I tried to hide the sore from the world by gilding it over with the show of my wealth. I know that there are many who have envied me my riches; but there is many a laborer on my estate, many a worker in my factories, with whom I would joyfully have changed places, had that been possible.

“Previous to my wife’s death I had a misunderstanding with Mrs. Burnett. I, who was so false myself, would have no mercy for falsehood in others; and since then I have not spoken with her. I know where she lives. I have often desired to see her, and to see my child, but I have held back—I scarcely know why, except that I cannot bear to meet the woman for whose sake I sinned so much, and who deceived me. Had it not been for that I would have married her. Dr. Largie died about five years ago.

“Jean Gorbai received an allowance from me: she repeatedly insisted upon having the amount increased, and two years ago—I suppose to be the better able to annoy me into compliance with her wishes—she came to live in Glasgow, and rented the house in Port-Dundas where she was assassinated. I know nothing of her life, beyond the fact that she drank much and had always an aversion to work. Of her husband I have heard nothing for about eight or nine years, when deceased told me he had been shipwrecked—I forget where—in fact, I do not think that she named any place.”

This statement had been all written down, and now that he had finished it, his head was bent forward on his hands, which were clasped on the top of his staff. There was a strange pause in the proceedings, as if the suspense for what was to follow made all present hold their breath.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER TACK.

INSPECTOR SPEIRS, who had gone out for a moment in obedience to a signal from Hadden, returned, and handed a note to the sheriff.

The latter perused the communication, and, despite the great self-control he exercised over himself, he started slightly and grew pale.

He passed the note to the fiscal, and in a few minutes afterwards the examination proceeded.

The note Inspector Speirs had handed to Mr. Lyon was a certificate of the marriage of Alexander Tavendale and Katherine Cargill.

"The prisoner is your nephew," said the fiscal, holding the paper he had just received under his hand.

"He is the son of my sister, who married in opposition to the wishes of her family. After her husband's death I took charge of the boy and educated him. Latterly he has had a position in our counting-house."

"You trusted him as one of your family?"

"Yes."

"And he was frequently at your house?"

"He was until a few months ago, when for private reasons I desired him to make his visits fewer."

"What were the private reasons for that request?"

"I was dissatisfied with his conduct," was the reluctant answer.

"On what grounds?"

Mr. Cargill paused, and appeared to find some difficulty in properly shaping his response.

"I had learned he was living beyond his income, and his conduct in the office was careless and inattentive, and—and I feared that my daughter was learning to like him more than I wished."

"Then you never thought of him as a husband for your daughter?"

"No."

"Did he ever make any proposal?"

"Never; and I would not have agreed to it if he had, unless I had found that my compliance was positively necessary to secure

my daughter's happiness. In that case I would not have opposed their marriage."

"Did he know that?"

"I do not think he did."

"Now, consider this question well, and answer to the best of your knowledge. Was the prisoner aware of the fact of your daughter's birth?"

"No," was the hesitating reply.

"Are you sure that he did not, from you or from any one else, learn these facts, any time before the murder of Jean Gorbai?"

The millionaire breathed hard, and his thin lips quivered. The prisoner regarded him with an anxious glance.

"Yes," he answered, in a husky whisper. "My daughter learned the miserable secret during my absence, and as she met the prisoner oftener than I suspected—as, in brief, she loved him—she thought it her duty to make him aware of the circumstances, and she told him all."

"When was that?"

"So far as I am aware, it was several days before—before the end of the week before last."

"Was the prisoner, to your knowledge, acquainted with the deceased?"

"He was not acquainted with her, so far as I know; but on one occasion he delivered a message from me to her, at her house in Port-Dundas."

"Now, have you any reason to suppose that the prisoner might have wished to remove Jean Gorbai, in the hope, by so doing, to secure your consent to his marriage with your daughter, and in the desire to save her from exposure and the loss of fortune?"

"I have no reason to suppose that."

"Jean Gorbai possessed certain proofs of the transfer of the children?"

"She did, in the shape of various letters written to her at different times by Mrs. Burnett and myself, before and since the event."

Mr. Cargill was now permitted to stand aside. Mr. Hewitt, the prisoner's agent, hastily advanced to him, and whispered:

"Mr. Tavendale desires me to say, sir, that he thinks you should not remain here. I, as his agent, will bring you every particular of the result of to-day's proceedings."

"Thank you; I shall be glad to see you."

But he made no effort to retire immediately, and Mr. Hewitt was obliged to return to his place without any satisfactory answer.

A variety of witnesses from Port-Dundas were again examined, the object being to discover any one who could identify the prisoner as one of the men who were seen about Jean Gorbai's house on

the day of the 15th. In this, however, the examination was not successful. The prisoner had been seen by Mrs. Fraser, the grocer, on the Saturday preceding the day of the crime, near her shop, but none of the witnesses had seen him thereabouts on the Monday.

The prisoner's declaration was very simple. On the 12th he had been made aware of the strange history of his uncle's past life. He was naturally much troubled on account of his cousin, whom he had left in a state of sad affliction. He doubted the truth of the story, it was so strange, and that very evening he had gone in search of Jean Gorbai in order to learn from her what credit might be given to the narrative, and what proof she could produce to authenticate it. He had failed to find her, and he had gone again on the 13th (Saturday) and several occasions. He had seen her once, but she had been under the influence of drink; and, although she boasted and jibed much, she told him nothing. He was still determined to see what proof she possessed, and had intended to watch her and bribe her till she displayed it.

He had been deeply pained and chagrined when he learned that she had been murdered, and he was wholly innocent of complicity in the remotest degree with the horrible crime.

He declined to say where he had been on the evening of the 15th, but he had not been near Port-Dundas.

The examination was adjourned till that day week, on the application of Inspector Speirs, who had just received a telegram from Captain Mactier stating that, by that date, he hoped to be able to produce important evidence.

Bail to any amount was offered on behalf of the prisoner, but the sheriff declined to admit bail.

The declaration of the prisoner had an effect on the sheriff up to the point where he declared his determination not to produce evidence of his whereabouts on the evening of the crime. If that portion of the statement had been omitted, or if it had been made to the opposite effect, Mr. Hewitt expressed his conviction that the sheriff would have accepted bail. As it was, the whole statement obtained a false color from that obstinate persistence in concealing the nature of his engagements on that particular evening.

There was one person, however, upon whom the final declaration had more effect than all the rest had. Hadden had listened with unmoved countenance to the prisoner's explanation until he came to those last words, and then the detective's visage underwent a startling change.

He looked up at the prisoner with an expression of utter bewilderment, which gradually changed to one of distress. For several

minutes after the sheriff had quitted the chamber, and the prisoner had been removed, he stood as one dumfounded by some extraordinary revelation.

Inspector Speirs touched his arm, and Hadden started as if with an electric shock. He seized the inspector's hand, and shook it wildly.

"Lord help me!" he groaned; "this is awful!"

"What's awful?"

"Where's the sheriff?" asked Hadden, without appearing to have heard the question.

"In his private room. The fiscal has just gone, and he is alone."

Hadden, without a word of explanation, darted away to the room, leaving the inspector with an impression that Sly Jock had lost his wits.

Without pausing to knock, Hadden rushed into the room where Mr. Lyon was seated, with his face hidden in his hands, thinking of the certificate of marriage, and of the hopes it destroyed.

The violent entrance of the detective startled him, and he looked up.

"We're all wrong—we're all wrong!" cried Hadden, excitedly, swinging his arms about.

"Who is all wrong, and what?" asked the sheriff, surprised and somewhat annoyed by this intrusion.

"We are—you are—and oh, worst of all, I have been!"

"Wrong about what?"

"This case—*that man is innocent!*"

He made the declaration vehemently, and Mr. Lyon stared at him as if he, too, suspected that his wits had been affected in some way.

He frowned slightly as he made answer:

"Innocent? All that has passed to-day leads to the opposite conviction."

"No, no! you're wrong, and I'm the cause of it all!" cried Hadden, with unabated excitement.

"What! you say this? you, who have been the main instrument in bringing his guilt to light?"

Hadden pressed his head against his hands, and swayed his body to and fro, like one distracted with the toothache.

"Yes, I say that—I, who have been the wretch to bring him to this pass. Lord help me! Lord help me! I have ruined him!"

"Will you explain yourself, sir?" said the magistrate, impatiently.

"Yes; I told you that the murder was committed by a man who had gone about it with the precision of a scientific process. He had arranged everything—*everything*, remember—with the exactitude of a mathematician. That man, whoever he was, is prepared with an

alibi—this man has none. That man knows that everything depends on the strength of his *alibi*, and he is prepared with one as carefully arranged as the details of the murder. Alick Tavendale is not that man."

"I shall be glad when you are able to convince me of that," said Mr. Lyon, dryly; "meanwhile, I must wish you good-afternoon."

"Will you not help me?"

"I can do nothing for you. You have succeeded in implicating him so far that I see little hope for him. You must extricate him if you can."

"And I will—I will!" cried John Hadden, rushing out of the room, stung by Mr. Lyon's reproaches, still more by the keen teeth of his own conscience.

He procured his hat and staff, and without a word of explanation to any one made off towards Port-Dundas.

At the entrance to one of the dirtiest of the "lands," which was situated within a stone's-throw of the house in which Jean Gorbai had been murdered, he stopped a minute to gain breath and collect his thoughts.

"I must have that boy," he muttered, as, pressing his hat on his head, and trying to force his features into a grin, he ascended the dirty stone steps to a door of a "but an' a ben," which was known as a cheap lodging for tramps and wayfarers who could afford no better.

As he paused on the last step he saw within a little fat old woman, with coarse features, and a cap with enormous frills, which had grown yellow in the smoke and dust of the place. An unfortunate child was rolling about on the floor, playing with some bits of sticks and old canes; while a lad, sharp and ragged, aged about fourteen years—the same who had told the captain of the man who had sent him with a message to Bob Little—was amusing himself and the child by an acrobatic performance.

At the present moment he was standing on his head, and the old woman was angrily calling to him in a husky voice:

"Will ye get down, ye vermin, and see wha's coming?"

CHAPTER XX.

WILLIE THORNE.

MR. HADDEN stepped into the place before the boy, in obedience to the angry command of the old woman, had regained the natural position of the human body, and stood on his feet instead of his

head. Hadden, with a broad grin on his visage, as if he had been delighted with the performance, patted the boy on the head, and the boy submitted to the act of patronage with a sly glance at the visitor.

Boy though he was in years and size, the life he had led had given him the experience and cunning of a man. His sharp face wore an old-fashioned expression of curiosity and uncertainty, as if he had some remote dread that the presence of such a well-dressed personage as the detective boded little good to the establishment.

His suspicion was rather confirmed than dissipated when Hadden, as if in reward for his performances, gave him a penny.

"Clever lad," said Hadden, in his most genial tones; "you'll make a fortune by and by if you don't emigrate."

The lad pocketed the penny, and glanced towards the dame, as if to see what she had to say on the subject.

The dame had been knitting on the entrance of the visitor, but she had dropped the work on her lap, and was now peering inquisitively at the gentleman. She did not know him to be connected with the police, or she would have given him a kindly welcome at once; for Mrs. Gibb had more than once had dealings with the authorities on account of some of her lodgers, and it was a principle of hers always to keep on good terms with the "force." So she was always ready to supply the representatives of the law with any information she possessed, and to regale them with "a dram" as often as they would accept her hospitality.

Mother Gibb's characteristics were pretty well known to the constables on the beat; and one of these characteristics was that, although willing at any moment to place her services at their disposal, she had never yet, by any chance, told them anything she could, by feigning ignorance or resorting to falsehood, conceal. It was known, too, that on more occasions than one she had enabled certain gentlemen or ladies who happened to be wanted to make a successful retreat from the grasp of justice.

Her house—or hovel, it should be called—was, therefore, one of the most closely watched of the low lodgings of Port-Dundas. She was aware of that—aware that everything she said was disbelieved until it had been proven true, and yet she preserved the utmost good-humor with any members of the force who visited her, whatever might be the hour, and whatever the inconvenience to herself or her lodgers.

The latter consisted chiefly of tramps and thieves of the lowest character, of both sexes and all ages. She charged threepence a night for lodgings, and frequently the hovel, which was not more than ten feet in breadth by twelve in length, would shelter over a dozen of those vagrants in one night. How they found room to

stretch themselves was a problem not easily solved by an uninitiated observer of the place. It was only managed by the gross system of huddling men and women, boys and girls, together, like so many sacks of cotton rolled on the floor and the truckle-beds.

As a general rule Mother Gibb's lodgers entered late and went out early, so that, as at present, in the afternoons she was left to her own reflections and the management of her grandson, Willie Thorne, with the care of any unfortunate child who might be left to her charge, on payment of fourpence a day, while the mother was at work in the mill.

At these hours Mother Gibb was rarely disturbed, save by a stray missionary or tract-distributor, who, being new to the place, understood little of her character, and, in the earnest pursuance of duty, hoped to benefit the woman and her household by counsel and prayer.

To such visitors the woman was scarcely civil, and if the visit happened to be repeated she became decidedly uncivil.

The plain black clothes and the innocent-like smile of Hadden suggested to her that he belonged to the class she cared least about, and so, while she still watched him narrowly, she picked up her work and recommenced knitting somewhat sullenly.

"You don't know me, mistress," said Hadden, with his broad, simple grin, and while his restless eyes noted the disposition and character of everything in the place.

"No, I dinna."

"Ah! never mind; we'll hope for better acquaintance."

"What for?"

The question was plump, very plain, and in a degree surly, so that Hadden was slightly perplexed for a fitting answer. He stooped down to the little girl, who was sitting on the floor, staring at him.

"Do you like to see your brother standing on his head, my lass?" he asked, with comical simplicity.

But the child, as if gifted with unusual insight into character, shrank away from him and hid herself behind the skirts of Mother Gibb, who thereupon spoke:

"Willie Thorne is no the brither o' the bairn, maister."

"I see, I see—a neighbor's? Just so; but Willie Thorne is your grandson, eh?"

"Well, and what about that?"

"And his mother's dead, and his father's over the sea—isn't that it, eh?"

"Ye seem to ken a' about it."

"Just so," replied Mr. Hadden, complacently; "but I'm not going to speak about the lad's parents. You don't want him to take a trip after his father, do you?"

The woman started, and her coarse visage twitched with suppressed anger.

"Na; no if I can help it."

"Well, there's a danger of it if you keep him here. Now, I want a sharp lad just like Willie; and if you'll let him go with me I'll bring him up to a good trade, and place him beyond the danger of getting into the same trouble as his father."

"And wha are ye?"

"Jock Sly."

At the sound of the name which had, on several occasions, spread terror among Mother Gibb's lodgers, the woman became humble at once, and willing to comply with anything he might require.

"Hey! what way didna ye say that afore? What would ye do wi' the lad?"

"He is a sharp lad—a very sharp lad, and as I've been watching him a good bit, I am certain that if he were to join the force under a skilful guide—myself, for instance—he'd be an honor to the profession, and a credit to me—eh?"

The woman peered over her knitting at the smiling face of the detective, as if she did not know how far she might trust him.

"Ay, he's a sharp lad," she muttered.

"For instance, now, we'll try him. Come here, Willie."

Hadden, making himself quite at home, drew a stool towards him and sat down. The boy, who had been listening with a cunning twinkle in his eyes to everything that was said, obeyed the visitor's command, and approached him slowly, but without any of the shyness of ordinary children.

"Now, Willie," said Hadden, drawing him between his knees, and scanning his features narrowly as he spoke, while he grinned with the complacency of a friendly patron of the family; "you would like to be rich, eh?"

"Ay, I would."

"And I told you a minute ago that you would make a fortune by and by. Will I show you how?"

"If you can."

"I can. Suppose you learn to read and write; you know a good deal already how certain things are managed, and if you were to become a detective one day you would always have plenty of money in your pocket, you would have little to do, and you would be going about to the theatres and amusements—everywhere that there is fun and frolic going on. You would be drawing hundreds of pounds as rewards for your work, and if you were a steady fellow you would make a fortune. What do you think of that?"

"What do ye think, granny?" said the lad, turning to his grandam.

"I think it sounds well eneuch, lad; but I dinna ken how it might turn out."

"Just so," Hadden broke in, "you don't see how it would suit him; but I see it in his eyes; the lad was born for the force. Now I'll show you how it would work: there's that case of the woman Gorbai; suppose Willie here could find out anything that would help us to lay our hands on the murderer—why, he'd get a hundred pounds down for that job alone. What do you say to that?"

The lad's eyes glistened at the thought of possessing a sum which seemed to him unlimited wealth, and his fingers moved nervously, as if they were already clutching the prize.

"Then there's the fun and the sport you would have in such a profession—why, it's more like a private gentleman who's got nothing to do but go about and amuse himself than working for a living," continued Hadden, his own eyes twinkling with satisfaction at the impression he saw his words had made.

"But how is he to set about doing onything o' that sort?" queried the dame cautiously, and knitting fast.

"Will you trust him to me?"

"If the lad likes."

"Here's your chance, Willie; you'll maybe never have such another. Will you go with me, and try for the hundred pounds?"

"Whan?"

"Just now. We'll begin at once to follow the track; we'll begin with the dandy you might have seen going into the court over there on Monday evening."

"What was he like?"

"Tall, a swell, smoking, and carrying a silk umbrella in this fashion."

And Hadden, rising to his feet, mimicked in a comical fashion the airs of a dandy swinging his umbrella as he walked along.

Willie clasped his hands together, and his eyes opened as wide as if they were about to start from their sockets.

"The hundred pounds for me!" he cried.

Mother Gibb dropped her knitting, and stared at the lad.

"Eh? what?" gasped Hadden, who, speaking at a venture from the deductions he had been able to make on his examination of Jean Gorbai's house, had certainly not expected that he would hit the mark so closely as Willie's exclamation seemed to betoken he had done.

"Was it a white hat the dandy chap had on?" asked Willie, breathlessly.

"Maybe," answered Hadden, nodding sagaciously, while he was trembling lest anything should disappoint the anticipations he had already formed, and desirous rather to make Willie declare

everything he knew by concealing his own ignorance on the subject.

"And a blue scarf?" continued Willie.

"Very like."

"And a pin wi' a horseshoe and diamond nails?"

"That's liker him still."

"Then that was the chap that nearly tumbled ower me at the corner, and gied me a crack wi' his umbreller for being in his way."

"What color trousers?"

"Snuffy brown."

That was not the color of the trousers Hadden had found in Taven-
dale's lodgings; and in his excitement at the discovery upon the
brink of which he seemed to be standing, he clutched his staff
viciously.

"What color and shaped coat?"

"Dark blue coat, and short cut."

That was not the color of Tavendale's coat, nor the shape, so far
as he could understand from the brief description "short cut."

"I told you, mistress, the lad was born for the force!" cried Had-
den, exultantly; and again, to the boy: "You'll make the fortune,
Willie, that's certain. One thing more—about what o'clock was it
when the swell tumbled on you?"

"It was after dark—maybe about eight o'clock."

That was the hour—at any rate, near enough to serve the pur-
pose.

"And what made you notice his get-up so closely?"

"Because he gied me a knock with his umbreller."

"Did you see his face?"

"No partickler; my een got sort o' fastened on the blue scarf and
the bonny pin, and the chap went on as fast as he could when he
gied me the blow, and I went on a bit, hollering after him. That
was how I noticed his trousers and coat, when he passed under the
lamp. I called him a blue devil for his coat, and snuffy swell for
his trousers."

"You saw where he went to, then?"

"Ay, he went into Higgin's Close, a bit after he thought I'd
stopped following him."

Hadden gripped the boy by the arm.

"Higgin's Close? that's just behind Jean Gorbals's house."

"That's the spot—dinna squeeze my arm, maister! it's rather
hard."

"Why didn't you tell us about this before?"

"Naebody axed me."

"Would you know the swell again?"

"I'd ken his back, for I took his measure."

"What height was he?"

"Nearly six foot."

"You wouldn't know his face again?"

"Maybe I would, if he were dressed in the same togs as I saw him in that nicht."

"Willie, your fortune's made."

"Hooroar!"

And Willie, in his delight, displayed a strong inclination to stand on his head again.

"You'll let him go with me, mistress?"

"I winna say nae, if the lad likes," answered Mother Gibb, who, although interested at the prospect of the reward, was stolid as ever. "But you'll have to give me the cash if there's ony comes o' what Willie's tauld ye."

"All right, mistress; I'll take care of that. You know where to hear of Jock Sly if you want him, so that you needn't be afraid of the cash getting into the wrong hands. Good-evening, mistress. Come along, Willie, my lad."

"Are you gaun to gie me the hundred pounds?"

"Come and see."

Willie, nothing loath, darted down the stairs to the street, his bushy, unkempt, and dirty hair tossing about his head confusedly in the wind. A cap was a luxury with which he was almost wholly unacquainted.

Hadden followed him, and proceeded with him in the direction of Higgin's Close.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE STABLE-YARD.

KATE had retained her position in the lobby of the sheriff's chambers until the last; but she was not aware that the business was over for the day until the door by which she was standing was flung open, and several clerks and constables hurried out.

She was hustled back from the door, and she would have been thrown down had it not been for a tall gentleman who gripped her arm and supported her.

"Miss Cargill!" he ejaculated, in a low, startled kind of voice. "I did not know you were here—the fiscal understood you were too ill to attend."

Her mind was so much occupied with the one cruel thought that she paid no heed; she did not even seem to observe that a gentleman who was a stranger to her was acquainted with her name.

"What has been done?" she asked, trembling with excitement.

"The examination has been adjourned till this day week," was the respectful answer.

"Adjourned—oh, then he will be saved! I knew that they could not condemn him. He will be saved!"

"I hope so, madam—sincerely hope so, for your sake as well as his own; but he is very obstinate, and I am afraid will do himself more harm by his obstinacy than they can do by all the evidence they can bring to bear against him."

"You are his friend?"

"Yes, my name is Hewitt; I am his agent in this unhappy affair."

"You his agent—you will save him!"

Mr. Hewitt looked somewhat gloomy, and shook his head as he replied:

"Whatever can be done to help him I will do; rest assured of that."

"Heaven bless you, sir—heaven bless you!" she cried, tearfully, although her eyes were parched, and she pressed his hand warmly.

"Shall I conduct you to the carriage, madam?" he said abruptly, as if anxious to avoid any expression of her gratitude while affairs were still in such a doubtful state. "Mr. Cargill is still in the office, and I will inform him that you are waiting."

"No, no, thank you! I—oh, here is Easton!"

That lady advanced to her mistress as her name was pronounced. She had long ago grown tired of waiting in the carriage, and so she had made her way hither in order to beguile the time by observing events.

Mr. Hewitt resigned the lady to the care of her attendant, and, apologizing for the necessity of abruptly taking his leave, was about to go away, when Kate detained his hand.

"One word, sir: can you, can any one, obtain for me permission to see Mr. Tavendale to-day?"

"I am afraid not to-day, madam; but I will try to obtain an order from one of the sheriffs."

"A sheriff can give the order?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you, sir; I will not in that case have to delay you. One of the sheriffs is a—is a friend."

"I shall be most happy to serve you, and should you fail to see your friend, you can send to my office in an hour, and I will do my best to procure the order."

He hurried away, and disappeared immediately among the crowd outside.

"Take me to some place where I can wait while you carry a

message to Mr. Lyon," she said quickly. She was very weak, but the excitement of the occasion seemed to give her unusual strength.

"We can go to the Royal George, ma'am," said Easton, whose mind was chiefly occupied with thoughts of dinner. "It's a fine hotel, quite close to here, and you can have something nice to eat; you must be hungry by this time—I am, although we had a glass of wine and a couple of biscuits."

Kate almost sickened at the mention of food, but she submitted to be conducted to the Royal George, where she was shown into a private parlor overlooking the stable-yard.

Easton was directed to bid the coachman put his horse in the stable, while Kate, seating herself at a little table by the window, hastily penned a few lines to Mr. Lyon.

Much to Easton's indignation, she was despatched at once with the note, without being allowed time to consume another glass of wine and couple of biscuits, much less to obtain dinner.

Kate had risen to give her the note, and she now stood at the window looking vacantly out upon the old-fashioned yard. The Royal George was an old-fashioned establishment, slow and steady in its ways. The house was always quiet and respectable. There was no confusion—no rushing about of commercial travellers in a hurry to catch trains, tumbling luggage about, and shouting to porters. Everything about the place was slow and conservative, and the only days on which its tranquillity was disturbed were the market-days, when burly, conservative country people of the middle classes came to dine and discuss the markets, and waken the house to life.

As this did not happen to be one of the lively days, Kate was undisturbed by any jarring sounds; but her reverie was suddenly interrupted, and her eyes frightened by something she saw.

Hewitt, Alick's solicitor, crossed the yard, and entered the stable, as if seeking some one. He came out immediately, as if he had been disappointed; and as he was recrossing the yard he was saluted by an hostler, who, pitchfork in hand, had just descended the ladder from the hayloft opposite to the window at which Kate was standing now, observant.

She could not hear their words, but she was somewhat surprised to observe the air of familiarity with which the hostler appeared to address Mr. Hewitt, and the quiet way in which the latter submitted to it, as if it were the customary style of their intercourse.

The hostler was a smart fellow of stunted growth, who had been a jockey, and might have been one still. His slight build and short figure, with the bare face, gave one an impression, at a distance, that he was quite a youth. This impression was heightened by the style of his dress. He was a bit of a dandy in his own way, and affected the fastest colors and the loudest.

Although in his stable garb he could not display much of his fashionable propensities, there was enough left in his working attire to indicate the man of the turf.

On approaching him, the lines about his mouth and small, cunning eyes seemed to contradict the notion of his age which his general appearance supplied, and one was compelled to admit that it was impossible to hazard a guess as to what might be his age, between twenty-five and forty.

Leaning coolly on his pitchfork, he surveyed Mr. Hewitt with the manner of an equal and a familiar. The lawyer was evidently chagrined by the fellow's manner; but either not having the power to correct, or not being willing to make a fuss about so small a matter, he swung his slim umbrella, and tried to look indifferent and unembarrassed. As a variety to the swinging movement he placed the umbrella behind him, and leaned heavily upon it, occasionally glancing at his watch as if he had an appointment, and was in a hurry to depart.

"You were to have been here i' the mornin'."

"Yes; but, confound it, haven't I told you I had to be at the fiscal's all day?"

"Oh, it's of no consequence to me; only I hope, now you've come, that you've brought the cash; because there'll be a blow-up if it is not paid to-night, every farthing."

"Well, I have not brought it, and it can't be paid to-night, or to-morrow night either."

"Phew!" whistled the hostler; and he began to chew a straw, while he watched the discontented face of Hewitt cunningly.

"Now, look here, Nick," said the latter, familiarly persuasive; "get the old beggar to give me ten days longer, and he'll have all that he ought to get, and more. If he blows upon me now—why, that will ruin me at once, and *that* won't help you or him either."

Nick appeared to reflect, and then said, quietly:

"All right, I'll see the old chap, and learn what he is going to do; then I'll come round to you to-night."

"What time?"

"Twelve."

"That'll do. Remember to tell him that he must wait if he wants to get anything."

"I'll tell him."

Mr. Hewitt, muttering something about expecting to see him at twelve, hurried out of the yard.

CHAPTER XXII.

CURIOUS OBSERVATIONS.

KATE observed that Mr. Hewitt quitted the stable-yard with the gait of one who is much dissatisfied about something, while attempting, by holding his head higher than usual, to conceal the dissatisfaction. It was, in fact, the gait of a person who attempts to display perfect confidence by the assumption of a swagger and a bold look. Mr. Hewitt swaggered—that is, swaggered so far as the term might be applied to one who maintained always the bearing and manner of the strictest respectability—and, either by accident or design, his hat had been tipped a little to one side, which, as sometimes happens with such trifling alteration of the arrangement of the dress, gave his grave, subdued person a somewhat rakish character.

Kate was struck by this singular change in one upon whose exertions the life of her husband depended; she was unpleasantly disturbed by the change, for, knowing little of the gentleman, she could not help feeling for the moment that the characteristics of the man about town were too easily assumed by the lawyer not to possess some inspiration from his real nature, which was totally concealed in the course of his business transactions.

She had been struck, too, by the familiarity with which the hostler had treated him, and the persuasive manner of Hewitt, as if he had been seeking some favor from the fast-looking personage, who displayed all the characteristics of the blackleg in his sharp, cunning face.

The low cunning of the fellow became all the more marked in the vicious grin with which he watched Mr. Hewitt leave the yard. Then he tucked the pitchfork under his arm, and leering, as if with the greatest gratification at the thought of having “done” some one, he made his way to the stable-door, where he entered into conversation with the coachman who had driven Miss Cargill into the city, and who was lingering about the stables to see his horses baited.

All these things Kate noted with an attention the source of which, had she tried, she could not possibly have explained; unless it might be—as it certainly had been at first—that she felt her own future so depended on Mr. Hewitt that his every movement was of interest to her now.

In a dreamy way she mentally asked herself what could have been the nature of his interview with that disagreeable character. Her cheeks glowed with the fancy—springing readily from the concentration of her thought on the one subject—that the interview bore some relation to Jean Gorbal's fate, and that Mr. Hewitt, in his zeal for the cause of his client, had subjected himself to the annoyance he had evidently experienced in the conversation with the hostler.

Easton returned in anything but a pleasant humor. Mr. Lyon had gone away ten minutes before she had reached the office. She had not followed him, because nobody had been able to tell her which way he had gone, or whether he had gone home or not.

"Mr. Hewitt has just left the yard," said Kate, hastily; "run after him and ask him to spare me a few minutes of his time."

Easton went out—she did not run, however—and she looked up and down the street. She did not venture beyond the door-step, for rain had begun to fall, and she had no intention of spoiling her bonnet, or getting her feet wet. It was one of those sudden spring showers which are short and heavy while they last.

She did not see Mr. Hewitt, but she did see a hansom cab driving off at full speed, and running alongside the cab a ragged urchin, who was apparently trying to speak to the occupant.

The occupant was Mr. Hewitt. He had just got into the cab, and as it started, the boy—who was now running by its side, straining his limbs to keep pace with it—had made after it with more than the usual eagerness of the street Arab who hopes to win a gratuity.

"Got a bawbee, sir?" shouted the lad, panting and breathless, while he strove to get sufficiently beyond the wheel to be able to see the gentleman inside. "Bawbee, sir?"

The persistence of the lad attracted the lawyer's attention, and he leaned forward to look at him with some curiosity.

"Stand clear!" shouted the driver, flourishing his whip threateningly.

Whether the lad was satisfied, by the glance he had obtained at the gentleman's face, that he was not likely to obtain the copper he sought, or was intimidated by the driver, he gradually slackened pace, allowed the cab to shoot ahead, and, as soon as it had turned the corner, he wheeled about, and retraced his way towards the Royal George.

Within fifty yards of that establishment he almost rushed into the arms of John Hadden, who, flushed with excitement, and a little out of temper, gripped him by the arm, and shook him savagely.

"What were you after, Willie, lad?" he said presently, in a kindlier tone than his look would have induced one to expect. "Why did you dart away from me without a word when I was going into the tailor's, eh, lad—what was't for?"

Willie Thorne gave himself a shake, as if to get his limbs into the position out of which they had been shaken by his patron.

"What did I bolt for?" he said, somewhat sulkily. "Because I saw the chap that hit me wi' his umbrella Monday week."

"Thunder!—where?"

"Getting into that cab ye saw me running after."

"Eh—eh!" cried the detective, clutching his staff with the air of one beside himself with chagrin. "And why didn't you shout to me instead of bolting off, as if you wanted to give me the slip?"

"I didna think o't."

"Did you see his face?"

"Ay, but it wasna the face I kenned; it was the back and shoulders—them I'd swear to—and the umbrella."

Mr. Hadden clutched his staff still more tightly, and seemed ready to perform a dance of despair.

"Thunder! and I did not see him—but you would know him again?"

"Ay, onywhere."

"Would you know the driver of the cab?"

"Ay, onywhere."

"Come on, then; I must get you into a suit of clothes, and then, if our bird's in Glasgow, we'll find him before he's much older."

Hadden conducted his *protégé* to a cheap, ready-made-clothing establishment, where he obtained for him the requisite garments. When he had been properly arrayed—having been allowed to wash himself in a little back room of the shop, Willie Thorne presented the appearance of a smart lad, with a premature gravity of visage.

Easton had remained at the door of the Royal George until Hadden and his little comrade had disappeared. She had observed Hadden hurry by the door, and encounter the boy who had been running after the cab; and as she had only a few days ago had some dealings with Hadden, she was interested—or rather her curiosity, which was a potent element of her character, was piqued—and in spite of the danger to her bonnet she had remained at the door watching him, and even thrust her head out partly in the rain to obtain a last glimpse of him as he turned a corner.

Then she went back to her mistress with the information that her utmost exertions had failed to discover Mr. Hewitt.

Kate impatiently looked at her watch.

"He said he would be at his office in an hour, and it is nearly an hour since then. I will go there now. Do you know the place?"

"Mr. Hewitt's?" answered Easton, indifferently. "No, I don't know where it is, but Mr. Cargill will be here directly, and he will be able to tell you."

"My father coming here? Then you have told him!" exclaimed Kate, with a flash of displeasure.

"I met him at the office when I was looking for Mr. Lyon, and the minute he saw me he asked where you were. I couldn't tell him anything but the truth, for he'd have been sure—"

"I would not have wished you to do otherwise."

"That was just what I thought, ma'am—miss, I should say," continued Easton, pertly, and by that apparent slip of the tongue reminding her mistress of her confidential position; "and so I told him you were here, and he bade me say that you were not to leave on any account until he joined you."

Kate seated herself wearily; the reaction from the excitement which had supported her weak frame all day had begun, and it soon became evident that, even had she purposed to disobey her father's message, she would not have had the strength. She was compelled to rest upon the couch. But she was reconciled to her position in some degree by the hope that her father would obtain for her the permission to see Tavendale she so much desired.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTERS.

SHE sat with elbow resting on the side of the couch, and her feverish brow on her hand. Her eyes were parched and aching, her pulse fluttering, and her whole strength so exhausted that she felt as if she could not move from the position she had assumed. But the sense of her bodily ailment was almost entirely lost in the bitter trouble of her mind.

Easton took advantage of her mistress's abstraction to quit the apartment in search of dinner, which all the trouble in the world did not seem capable of making her forget or neglect.

Mr. Cargill arrived soon afterwards, and he entered the room leaning heavily on his staff and the arm of his footman. Without, apparently, glancing towards Kate, he dropped on a chair by the centre-table, and by a motion of his hand dismissed the attendant.

A few minutes of silence, during which the shame-stricken man glanced slowly round the chamber. His eyes rested an instant on a large Chinese screen near the fireplace, and then passed on to his daughter. Her head drooped before him; yet there was no anger in his glance. The rigid, shrunken features betrayed neither wrath nor sympathy; but the bent form, which had previously been so erect, and the dull, stolid eyes, which had been only a little while ago so keen and bright, indicated how much the man was suffering. How poor was all his wealth, now that it could not purchase any balm to soothe his agony!

"I thought you were to remain at home, Katie?" he said, in a voice so feeble and pitiable that, with a sob, she half rose to throw her arms round his neck and comfort him.

The tone and manner revealed to her how dear she was to him in his distress. And yet he checked the movement of her affection by raising his hand, which dropped immediately on his knee like a lump of lead.

"I am not going to blame you, my poor child," he continued, in the same pitiable voice as before. "Heaven knows I am bitterly conscious that the blame of what you do, and of the affliction that has befallen you, rests upon myself. But it would have been wiser, I think, for Alick Tavendale's sake, had you obeyed me. Your marriage with him does not appear to have become known yet, and so long as it can be concealed, it will be one argument the less against him."

"I—I could not rest, father, knowing his cruel position. I should have gone mad had I remained at home. Ah, I am indeed punished for deceiving you, since our marriage argues so fatally against his innocence. But is it so fatal that we must conceal it?"

"I do not know. I have consulted his agent, and he thinks that unless the revelation is unavoidable we should not make it."

Kate bowed her head, as an attendant appeared.

"The young lady is here, sir."

"Bid her enter."

The door closed on the attendant.

"Take a seat behind that screen," Mr. Cargill said, with a shade of his old firmness in the command. "You can hear what passes, but it will be better that you should not be seen at first."

Without seeking any further explanation of this singular command, Kate obeyed, and took a seat on a chair behind the screen.

The rustling of her dress had scarcely ceased when Sarah Burnett was introduced to the chamber.

She remained standing near the door. She was pale, but self-possessed and respectful. The deep emotion she experienced in being thus brought for the first time into immediate contact with her father was only indicated by the faintest tremor of her lips.

"Be seated, Sarah Cargill," he said coldly.

She trembled at the sound of the name he had given her, but she made no attempt to respond. She took a chair close by where she had been standing, as if she did not think herself warranted yet in displaying any familiarity. Her humility appeared to displease him much, for he said sharply:

"Come nearer, girl! Are you a fool? Come nearer! Am I not your father?"

Still without replying, and trembling under his displeasure and the natural agitation with which her peculiar position inspired her, she

advanced to a chair almost within arm's reach of her parent. Her back was turned towards the window, so that, unhappily, he could not readily perceive the agitation he caused her, else he might have spoken more mildly.

"You have found your father," he said sternly, "but you must learn that at the same time you have lost your liberty. I require implicit obedience from all who—who are connected with me."

Sarah acknowledged her readiness to obey by a simple inclination of the head. She had received a severe shock in the examination she had undergone in the fiscal's office, and she had not yet recovered from its effects sufficiently to be able to conduct herself with her ordinary calmness—a calmness which supplied her character with a firmness equal to that of Mr. Cargill himself, in the days when he had felt himself furthest and safest from the exposure of the past.

In the office Mr. Cargill, after his examination, had been conducted to a seat close to Sarah; and, as soon as the proceedings had finished, Mr. Hewitt had directed his attention to his daughter. The humiliated millionaire thanked him, and then told his servant to bring Miss Burnett after him. The accidental encounter with Easton had decided where the interview he meditated should take place.

Now that she was before him, the unreasoning passion which he felt at the thought that she was the primary cause of his exposure quickened the sense of his humiliation, and made him feel disposed to hate her. So, much of his old, cold sternness returned to him.

At the same time Sarah's consciousness of how little she merited unkind treatment from him stirred the pride of her heart, and did more to restore her self-possession than anything else could have done.

At this point there was little amiability, and no sympathy, in the regards which father and daughter fixed on each other.

"Circumstances have violently altered my plans," said the millionaire at length, in a dry, severe tone. "You have been defrauded of your birthright, of your name, and the position you should have occupied. That shall be amended in so far that from this date forth you are Sarah Cargill—the name, the fortune, all that I have to give, is yours."

"Oh, sir, I—"

"Be silent, or at least reserve your thanks until you know how far they are merited. Understand me: all that I am now doing is done under compulsion, and, had circumstances permitted, my daughter Kate would never have been dragged from the position I had given her to change places with you."

"I understand you, sir," replied Sarah, quietly. "The act by which you deprived me of what belongs to me was a cruel and a guilty one; but I know that, once committed, you had no alternative

but to carry out the deception to the end. Your position is too prominent to have permitted a voluntary restitution of my rights, and in my heart I wish that it had been possible to save your name from ignominy at the cost of any wrong to me."

This answer surprised the father, and agreeably, although he concealed his satisfaction, and continued coldly, as before,

"I have no right to your affection or esteem; I do not expect either; but deference and obedience I demand. At the age of thirty-nine, when my father died, I could not recall one occasion on which I had contradicted him, or interrupted him when he was speaking, as you have done; or of having passed judgment on his acts, as you have done on mine. These are facts for you to remember. Enough of them for the present. By to-morrow that portion of Mavisbank House which was formerly occupied by your mother will be prepared for your reception. Carriages and servants will be placed at your command, with such an allowance as will enable you to maintain your position. What introductions I may still be able to give you shall have; and as soon as this trial is over we will proceed to the Continent until time has, in some degree, smoothed the memory of this scandal. I need not warn you to be circumspect in your conduct, as you will be the object of innumerable curious and impertinent attentions. You will feel that for yourself, and you will act accordingly. What education have you received?"

"Sufficiently good, sir, to prevent me disgracing the high position in which you wish to place me," she rejoined, modestly.

"Can you ride?"

"No, sir; not at all. But if necessary I will be a perfect horsewoman in six months, or break my neck."

"It is necessary to become a horsewoman and break nothing. These are trivial things, and can easily be managed. But what cannot be managed easily is to enable you to bear up against this horrible disgrace so that you obtain the proper respect due to your position. With that we must deal as events shall dictate. A coward might send you abroad and hide his own head anywhere from the gaze of the world. But I am no coward, and I will brave the shame my own act has brought upon me. You shall suffer no longer for my guilt. To begin with, you shall accompany me now to Mavisbank, and I will openly present you to the household as Miss Cargill."

The old man, proud still, even in his disgrace, had spoken with growing warmth in his resolution boldly to meet all the scorn that might be cast upon him. He rose from his seat and approached the bell, as if about to order the carriage at once for the journey to Mavisbank House.

Sarah intervened.

She had listened to her father with vision dazzled by the brilliance of the prospect he held out to her. It was to her the grand transformation scene effected by the magic of a fairy's wand, from the straits and troubles of petty respectability to the ease and magnificence of unlimited wealth. But she kept strict guard upon her visage, and revealed nothing of the real delight with which she viewed the future. She listened with an air of sorrow, as if the position were forced upon her against her will.

"Will you permit me to say something, sir, before you summon your servant?"

"As you please."

"Then first, sir, believe me, I feel the generosity with which you are prepared to sacrifice your own feelings for my sake; I feel it more than I can tell you. I am sensible of the many advantages you are about to confer upon me, although I would have enjoyed them more had they cost you less. I had no expectation of being received by you in this generous way, and therefore your proposition—or perhaps I should say your commands—falling upon me so suddenly, and requiring such a total change in my life, confuse me a little, and render it difficult for me to see at once what course duty requires me to follow."

"Your duty is to obey me."

"Do not be angry with me, sir," she said meekly, and drooping her eyes respectfully before his stern regard, "but you cannot, you must not, forget that I have formed other ties before I was aware that I owed you any duty; and these ties make some demand upon me, even as I know there are ties which make some demand upon you. The unhappy revelation of my true position has been violent and wretched enough without our making it more violent by new injustice to others."

"You speak boldly," replied Mr. Cargill, with some asperity.

"I hope not, sir. I hope I am only speaking truth which you must feel as well as myself."

With a curt motion of the head he seemed to bid her proceed.

"I trust you will see that, sir; at any rate, I will try to show you that it is as much my respect for you as any other sentiment which urges me to speak." Sarah was gaining confidence as she went on, for, despite his evident impatience, she saw that he was impressed by the simple earnestness of her manner.

He offered her no word of encouragement, however. He sat with his thin lips closed tightly, and brows knit, watching her narrowly.

"You will forgive me, sir," she continued, in a subdued, respectful manner, "if I begin by reminding you of—of Kate—my sister."

He started, then inclined his head, without speaking.

"In your wish to repair the wrong done to me, you are—pardon

me, sir, if the words seem disrespectful—you are forgetting what is due to her. You would take me to Mavisbank and present me to your household as Miss Cargill, the future mistress of the establishment. By doing so, can you not see in what a disagreeable position you place me with regard to her? You submit her to the unpleasant comments and impertinent gaze of the few who may be from any cause indifferent to her—there can be none who positively dislike her—and you submit me to the not less unpleasant contempt of the many who have good reason to love and respect her.”

“There are none who dare question my decision,” he said, dryly.

“Perhaps not, sir; but there are a thousand ways in which people may show contempt for me without openly questioning your decision. But to that I can be wholly indifferent. All that people might look or think or say, I could pass unheeded, but I know that Kate could not. She would fret under it, and blame herself for anything that I might have to suffer. When people pointed to me as the mistress of the house—as one who had rushed into her position with the eagerness of a victor into a conquered fort—she would smart under it, because she has a good, generous heart and would know that I was blamed in proportion as she was loved.”

“And are you afraid of what people may say of you in reclaiming your proper position?” he asked, with a degree of contempt.

“No, sir, I am not afraid of what anybody might say or think; but I am afraid of what I might feel myself. And I know that were I to rush into your house I should feel like a vicious creature, that, happening to obtain a little strength, snatched at the nest of some simple bird and destroyed it. I am afraid of feeling that, sir, and until I know that my sister Kate is to be regarded as my equal in name and fortune—in all things—I will not, even for your command, sir, which I should be sorry to oppose, move from my present position.”

Again Mr. Cargill was surprised, and agreeably so. These were generous words, spoken by one who had been grievously wronged, and from whom they could least have been expected. The bright flush on her pale face indicated the depth of her sincerity. Kate was very dear to him; and if Sarah had been trying to gain his affection and esteem, she could not have taken any more effectual method than this.

Kate herself, who, with hands clasped on her knees, was listening to it all, was deeply touched by the expression of Sarah's sympathy.

“Be satisfied,” said Mr. Cargill, in a softer tone than he had yet used, although masking the comfort he experienced in her words; “be satisfied; Kate shall be cared for as tenderly as you could wish. But how her future conduct may be regulated I cannot say until this unhappy trial is over.”

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed Sarah, with hands moving nervously, as if she longed to clasp her father round the neck and hug him to her heart, "you cannot know how much relief you have given me. You have, too, supplied me with one of the strongest arguments for delaying my removal to Mavisbank as your daughter. I know how much my sister has at stake in this terrible trial—"

"You know!" he interrupted, half rising from his chair in alarm.

"Yes, she told me herself to-day; and when you know how deeply I feel the trouble that has befallen her, you will not, you cannot, ask me to add to her grief by any act of mine, or any act of yours that I may prevent."

"Yes—yes," he muttered, shading his eyes with his hand.

"There is one more argument, sir, why I should remain as I am for a little while. Mrs. Burnett—"

"Ah!" The ejaculation was sharp and spasmodic; it indicated that all these years of separation had not wholly extinguished the power of the man's fatal passion.

"Mrs. Burnett, the mother of Katherine, and whom I have regarded and loved as my own until within a very few days"—Sarah's voice faltered here, and Mr. Cargill still shaded his eyes—"she is lying at the point of death. Would you have me neglect the sacred duty which calls me to her side at such a time as the present? Surely not, sir."

"Sarah!" exclaimed Mr. Cargill, under his breath; and his chin sank on his breast as he leaned back on his chair, thinking of the past, which had been resuscitated with so much bitterness.

"She has done me grievous harm, deceived me when I trusted most," he muttered, replying to his own thoughts; "she has marred my life, and made my age a shame. But am I to be implacable? She is dying—dying under the horrible disgrace which has fallen on Kate—our child, and through me alone the disgrace exists. At this hour what consolation might not a word from me bring her?"

He rose hastily to his feet.

"I will go with you."

Sarah seemed to be alarmed by this unexpected proposition.

"You, sir? Ah, no. Do not make yourself a witness of a spectacle that would trouble you always. Mrs. Burnett lives, perhaps; but all sense, every faculty of the mind, has vanished. She could never recognize you, nor hear; and even if the past were so potent that your voice might recall her to consciousness, even for a moment, it would only be to kill her, sir; for the shock would be much too great for her feeble frame to endure a moment after."

The tears in Sarah's eyes seemed to fascinate the man, and softened him towards her more even than her generous self-denial had done. He breathed with difficulty, and, extending his hands, he

drew her slowly to his side, then kissed her affectionately on the brow.

"Go, then, alone, my child; and give me early tidings whether she is better or worse."

"Thank you," she said, in a low, tremulous tone, affected by the address, "my child;" and, drawing a long breath, she added, "*my father.*"

There was a brief pause, during which the choking sobs of Kate would surely have been heard by Sarah had her own thoughts and feelings been a degree less absorbed.

"You are a good girl, I think," said Mr. Cargill, slowly, "and I may yet learn to be grateful that my sin has received its punishment, since I have found you."

"It shall not be my fault if you do not, father," she answered, simply. "But, for the present, my place is by the side of her who has been as a mother to me."

A soft hand was laid upon her arm as she spoke, and, turning her head quickly, she looked into the tearful eyes of Kate.

"Your place is here, Sarah," said the sweet voice; "*my* place is by the bed of my dying mother."

But, indeed, it seemed as if she needed some one to nurse her rather than she should nurse another, for she was so weakened by the mental and physical suffering she had undergone that she had only tottered across the room to speak, and at the moment she would have fallen had not Sarah's strong, protecting arm encircled her waist, and supported her to a chair.

"You must not think of that, Kate," she said, in a low, firm voice; "you are quite unfit for such a task. You have already suffered too much. For Alick Tavendale's sake, for your father's and for mine, you must not kill yourself outright; nay, you shall not."

"But my mother—my own mother—is dying!" cried Kate, sobbing bitterly; "and I must go to her—I must speak to her."

"Alas! that is impossible for the present," interrupted Sarah, trying to soften the pain she was compelled to cause; "you could not help her, and you would only add to your own distress. Dear Kate, you have been in the room—you have heard me. You know that I love you; yield to me in this, then—at least, until you have obtained rest, or until I am able to send you tidings that you may come."

"Sarah is right," said Mr. Cargill, huskily; "you must remain with me for the present."

"To-morrow—" began Sarah.

"Ah, to-morrow," interrupted Kate, wringing her hands, and raising her sad, sweet face, as if in appeal to Heaven—"to-morrow she may be dead."

Sarah looked distressfully to her father, and he paced the floor, glancing frequently at Kate with an expression of intense fear and pain. At length he halted, and spoke resolutely:

"Kate, you must submit to me in this. Your strength has been taxed far too much, and I begin to fear for your own safety. You must go home with me to-night; and to-morrow, if you are strong enough, I will myself take you to your mother."

Sarah made no comment upon this, but it was evident by the quick shade which flitted across her brow that she either did not approve of the arrangement, or doubted whether their coming on the morrow would be of advantage to any of them.

Kate tried to stifle her sobs and dry her eyes, then feebly she placed her hand in her father's in token of submission. She did not even refer to her desire to see her husband that night, for she had become anxious for strength to accomplish the work of the morrow.

Mr. Cargill ordered the carriage; and the brougham which had brought Kate to the city conveyed Sarah to Hill Street, while her father and sister were driven to Mavisbank.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MEDICAL OPINION.

SARAH would have been scarcely human if her interest in Mrs. Burnett had been so intense as to exclude all other thoughts and sentiments save those appropriate to the death-bed of a frail creature who had sinned and who had been punished.

The woman had wronged her deeply; and now that the restoration to her rights was at hand she could not altogether repress the sense of exultation. She could not help, as she was being driven along in the brougham, lounging back on the soft seat, experiencing a warm glow of satisfaction at the thought that in a few days this vehicle would be at her command, with every luxury her heart could desire. It was a dazzling prospect to one who, although unacquainted with positive want, had been compelled to let many little wishes go ungratified, and who had been compelled to learn the lesson of self-denial; it was a dazzling prospect for her, that in which pinching and calculation would be wholly unnecessary, when she would only have to wish to possess.

But when the carriage stopped at the house in Hill Street she had commanded her features to grave calmness; her eyes were a little brighter than usual, but that was the only indication of the pleasure she felt when she entered the house of death. The girl Susan had opened the door, and gazed in open-mouthed wonder at the grand

conveyance in which her young mistress had arrived, as it drove away.

"Has any one been here for me?" asked Sarah, as she passed into the parlor.

"Yes, miss; Mr. Hewitt was here, and seemed to be very anxious to see you."

A sudden shade of trouble, or alarm, it might even have been called, flitted across Sarah's visage, and she spoke quickly:

"Why did he not wait?"

"He said he couldn't; but he'll come back some time this afternoon, when he must see you."

Sarah seemed to draw a quick breath, and then, as she proceeded to divest herself of bonnet and cloak, said, quietly,

"Has the doctor called?"

"He came just after you went out, and he did not look as though he was pleased with the state of the poor mistress. He came back again, and he's there now."

"Very well; I'll go to him. If Mr. Hewitt returns you can bring him in here, and call me."

On entering the invalid's chamber, Sarah, with a quick glance, observed that no change for the better had taken place during her absence; indeed, rather the reverse.

Mrs. Burnett lay on her back, her eyes closed, and the once fine features so sharp and rigid that but for the occasional spasms which passed over them, and over the whole body, one might have thought her already dead. But, even with these pitiable indications of life, the face was so white and clammy with the perspiration of pain that it was more like death than life.

Everywhere in the chamber were the signs of a severe illness: the close atmosphere, the many phials on the mantelpiece and the table, the basins and sponges, and the paper-covered glass in which lay half a dozen leeches.

By the head of the patient stood a woman of middle age—a nurse whom Dr. Mitchell had insisted upon calling in to the assistance of Sarah. The doctor himself was seated beside the bed, holding the patient's wrist, and watching her with a gloomy expression. He rose as Sarah entered.

"At last you have come," he said gravely, shaking her hand.

"I was detained much longer than I expected," she answered, as if feeling the necessity of an explanation. Then, watching him anxiously, she added, in a trembling voice, "Is she any better?"

The doctor shook his head despondingly.

"She is worse," he responded, reluctantly. "These spasms have recurred with alarming frequency since morning, and all that I have been able to do has failed to check them."

He stopped; Sarah had gripped his arm and turned her eyes to the invalid, who had moved and uttered a low moan.

"She has heard you."

"I wish she had," replied the doctor, "for that would be the best possible symptom. We shall see."

He advanced to Mrs. Burnett, and, taking her wrist again, he felt the pulse, while he watched her with the profoundest attention. Then he gently raised the lid of one of the eyes.

The eye was glazed and stony, reflecting no ray of intelligence.

"Judge for yourself," he said, in a low voice; "take her hand and speak to her. Your voice will rouse her, if any human sound can."

Sarah, with a cold shudder, approached as directed, took the nerveless hand in hers, and, bending down so that her mouth was close to the ear of the invalid, murmured:

"Mother, it is me, Sarah—your own Sarah. Speak to me—give me some sign that you hear." But the features remained rigid; not the faintest breath or sign betokened intelligence.

"You see," said the doctor, after a long pause, during which the signal of hope was eagerly looked for; "I told you how it was."

"My poor mother!" exclaimed Sarah, low and huskily. "Is she in pain, sir?"

"At this moment, no."

During this trial the nurse had passed over to the fireplace, and, after looking at the little gold watch which hung on a mahogany stand, proceeded quietly to prepare a mixture from one of the phials. She touched the doctor on the shoulder, and he took the glass from her. Then he desired Sarah to stand aside while he endeavored to coax the draught down the insensible invalid's throat. He told Sarah that he was about to administer a powerful potion, and that if it failed he could do nothing more.

Sarah, as if willing to escape the spectacle of the administration of this forlorn hope, passed over to the window, not sobbing or uttering any sound, but gently wiping her eyes with her handkerchief.

Then she looked out upon the street, and saw the lamplighter speeding on his task, and, as the jets of light sparkled forth on the pavement, she saw men and women hurrying on their various ways. It seemed strange that none paused to look at the house where the last act of the sad tragedy of a life was being played out.

What else did she think about while the woman who had wronged her, and who had yet given her so many proofs of maternal tenderness, lay there dying? Did she regret her? Did she not think of the brilliant future which had that day been opened to her, and upon which she was so speedily to enter? Who can tell?

She turned quickly at the sound of the doctor's voice.

"She has swallowed it; that is so far good. If in four hours she has not made any movement, we will give her another draught of the same potion. If in four hours after that she has still shown no sign of consciousness, we will give her a third, and then—"

"And then?" said Sarah, quickly, as the doctor paused.

He made no answer, but slightly turned away his face from her eager, inquiring eyes.

"I understand your silence, doctor," she murmured brokenly, "for I remember that even when you first saw her you said she was lost."

"Scientifically, yes, perhaps. But I do not despair even yet." He was evidently speaking rather to soothe the daughter's affliction than out of any great faith he had in the result of his labors. "Only last year I witnessed a case of paralysis almost exactly similar to this. A great and sudden calamity occurred—the man was stricken down; and yet, after lying for more than a week in an insensible condition, he recovered, and is alive yet, although he has lost the use of his left side, and his mind is somewhat weakened."

"Ah, that is what I dread almost as much as her death—that she should live and yet be dead to us. But is there no hope that she will recover, even for a little while—recover sufficiently to be able to recognize those around her, and speak to them, however briefly?"

Sarah put the question with strange eagerness—the eagerness not so much of dread that such an event was beyond hope, but rather of some inexplicable fear that it was *not* beyond hope. This peculiarity of manner was very slight, however; it was not observed at all by the doctor, and it was doubtless produced by the peculiarly mixed feelings of her present position in regard to the dying woman.

"It is not easy to say," rejoined the doctor, thoughtfully. "This malady sometimes disappoints the most careful calculations one way or the other. To-morrow she may be attacked with delirium, which might give her temporary strength."

"Then she would speak?"

"Certainly; but that state would not heighten the prospect of her recovery."

"And—and would she have reason—I mean intelligence, enough to recognize any one—to remember anything of the past?"

"Very possibly," replied the doctor, eying his questioner curiously; "but why do you ask?"

"Because I wish her to see Mr. Cargill and his daughter Katherine," returned Sarah, quickly, "and one word from her to him would serve me greatly."

"I understand." Dr. Mitchell was a friend of Mr. Hewitt's, and had been made acquainted with the main facts of Sarah's circum-

stances. "Well, I can promise you nothing. The probability is as strong against you as for you. But do not leave her, for if sense does return, it may be no more than a flash, which will vanish immediately. You must try to profit by it, brief as it may be."

"Thank you."

"I have three visits to make," he added, looking at his watch. "I will come back about twelve o'clock."

The doctor departed, and Sarah, with troubled brow, took the seat he had lately occupied by the bedside. Mechanically her eyes followed the noiseless movements of the nurse, and then reverted to the white, clammy face on the bed, from which they quickly started again, as if the sight were too much for her to bear.

She seemed to sit there rather as in stern submission to duty than one swayed by the love which lingers over the last moments of the loved one, and holds them more precious than gold. By and by she began to look anxiously at the watch on the mantelpiece, and, as the hours passed, a shade of impatience overspread her countenance, and did not leave it until, just after ten o'clock struck, Susan brought her the intelligence that Mr. Hewitt had arrived, and was waiting in the parlor.

CHAPTER XXV.

A BAD LOOKOUT.

MR. HEWITT was sitting in the corner of the parlor farthest from the door. One leg was crossed over the other, his arms were folded on his breast, and his hat was drawn down over his nose, while he leaned back on the chair.

The attitude was much the same as that of a defiant member of Parliament listening to a severe exposure of his own failings. It was a singular attitude for one of his placid nature; for he was reputed to be such a very steady gentleman, and so self-possessed, that nothing short of an earthquake could have drawn emotion from him, and not even an earthquake would have roused him to any display of passion.

Yet here he was in a decidedly melodramatic attitude, as if prepared to defy fate itself; and when Sarah softly entered the room, and closed the door after her, he threw up his hat with a jerk, revealing a face flushed as with chagrin and rage.

Sarah had seen much more of the inner character of her betrothed than any one else—except, perhaps, his mother, and even she had been surprised by his conduct of late—even she thought that something like an earthquake had happened, or was about to happen im-

mediately, and that its rumbling was already sounding up from the depths underground.

Sarah halted when she had reached the centre of the apartment, and gazed upon him inquiringly.

For an instant he seemed abashed by her gaze, and half ashamed of his bearing of mock-heroic despair; then he sprang to his feet. One stride brought him to her side. He seized her in his arms, and gave her a somewhat rough, spasmodic sort of hug.

As if he were half ashamed of that, too, he released her instantly, and retired a pace, with hands clasped tightly behind him, apparently thinking it necessary to hold them fast there, lest he should be tempted to repeat the embrace.

During all this Sarah had only continued to stare at him, trying vainly to discover whether she might attribute his strange conduct to an unusual indulgence in drink, or to some calamity.

"Don't look at me that way," he said, avoiding her eyes. "I'm half crazed as it is, and you'll make me whole crazed presently if you go on staring."

His voice was husky, and scarcely raised above a whisper, but it was perfectly distinct; and his manner showed drink was not the cause of his condition.

She laid her hand on his shoulder, and in her slow, firm way, that had something of masculine self-possession in it, said :

"What is the matter, Laurence? Did I do or say anything wrong to-day?"

"No, no—not so far as I know," he responded, changing his position uneasily; "you did everything as it should have been done, and said everything as it should have been said, so far as I saw and heard. That's not it."

There was bitterness in his tone, and she was still more perplexed.

"Sit down there, and I will tell you all that I did and said when you neither saw nor heard. Sit down."

He obeyed awkwardly, and she took a seat by his side. Then she narrated all that had occurred at the Royal George, without omitting the slightest detail.

She spoke with the intention of relieving him and giving him time to collect himself. She achieved her object completely, for the cloud cleared from his brow as she proceeded to state how freely and promptly her father had decided upon restoring her to her true position. But the cloud gathered again when she told him how, for propriety's sake, she had desired a slight delay in the open declaration of her birthright, and how her father had acquiesced.

"That was all as I expected it would be," he said, with a breath of relief when she had finished; "all as I expected, but not the delay. Still, even that may be managed."

He added the words reflectively, as one who is seeking a way out of a difficulty.

"It could not have been arranged otherwise without much annoyance to me, and some doubt being cast upon me. I do not see what there is to be managed."

Quiet and most business-like her tone, without the slightest note of passion that might betoken love.

"Umph! everything has to be managed, and particularly so at this stage of our affairs."

"Explain, if you please, as that will doubtless enable me to understand your singular excitement."

"Singular, indeed, you may call it; but you—only you—have seen it. None other ever could; and even from you it would have been hidden, were it not that we are bound together by ties that no power on earth can break. No power—save death."

It would have astonished the gentleman's clients and the officers of the court if any of them had obtained a glimpse of the livid passion on grave, respectable Mr. Hewitt's visage at that moment. Even Sarah shrank slightly from him; there was something so terrible—something so *deadly* in his expression.

"I never saw you like this before," she said, in calm rebuke, recovering from her momentary timidity.

"No, and never will again, I hope; for I have nerves of iron, Sarah, and can bind down my tongue and face, although my heart be bursting. No, you never shall see me like this again, so don't trouble yourself about it; only it is rather hard when one's finger-tips are touching a great, a grand prize, to see the prospect of some contemptible little hitch in one's arrangements snatching it away forever, without being permitted to vent one's heartache in a groan."

"Yes, it is hard; but, you see, I do not understand you yet."

"No, of course not. I will explain. I have told you that I am in debt. I am deeply in debt, and yet my wide circle of respected patrons would swear that I am incapable of owing any man a farthing; but I do owe a good many farthings."

"Yes," slowly and thoughtfully.

"But they must not know it. None must know it but you and I, and my debtors. Well, I have made some unlucky speculations on"—on the turf, he was going to say, but altered his mind—"on various promising affairs which have failed. Now, there's one old fellow—a Christian, but harder than any Jew I ever heard of—who lent me a couple of thousands for these speculations. He is not a nice character; he has a good deal to do with betting and that sort of thing, and to be known to be connected with him would be utter ruin to me, and would do you no good, if it did not do you some harm."

"Well, do not let your difficulty be known."

"Yes, but there's the bother. The infernal fellow wants his money—wants it now, and must have it by twelve o'clock to-morrow, or else he will expose me."

Sarah's dark lashes drooped over her eyes, and he watched her intently.

"Well?" she said at length.

"Well," he echoed impatiently, "you see the scrape; can you think of no excuse by which you could get Cargill to advance that sum at once?"

"None at present; but by half-past eleven to-morrow I shall have found some means of meeting the difficulty."

Hewitt, with another stiff, spasmodic movement, hugged her to his breast. She disengaged herself gently, and said, in a low but less hard voice than before:

"There is a probability that Mrs. Burnett will recover consciousness, and speak, before she dies."

Hewitt started, and livid passion flashed in his face again. He rose, paced the floor, then sat down, and they talked together for an hour.

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNDER THE SHADOW.

AT half-past ten on the following morning Mr. Cargill arrived with Kate at the house in Hill Street.

They were about to be conducted to the parlor, but the millionaire desired to be taken at once to the invalid's chamber. They were at the door, when it opened suddenly, and Sarah appeared. She closed the door behind her, keeping her hand upon it, while she motioned the visitors back with an expression of terror on her face.

The movement of Sarah's hand, the expression of her face, and the quivering of her lips affected Mr. Cargill and Kate as with a shock of terror; for to them these signs seemed to declare at once that they had arrived too late; and they drew back accordingly, alarmed and silent.

The millionaire, already overwhelmed with the sharp pangs of the shame that had come upon him, was at first like one stupefied. He was confused by Sarah's signal, or, rather, by his own interpretation of it, and he felt stunned with an undefinable sense of a great and unexpected loss.

Kate only clung the more tightly to her father's arm, and gazed with wearied, anxious eyes at Sarah.

"Is she—is she gone?" asked Mr. Cargill, presently, in a quivering voice.

"No, not yet," answered Sarah, in a whisper. Her bearing was collected, although her eyes were very red. There was no danger of any outburst of grief on her part; whatever she felt, she held it down. Her grief was not for the common eye to gaze on.

"Not yet," echoed Kate, feebly, while her bonny fawn's eyes lighted with a gleam of hope. "Ah, then, we are not too late. I will see her—she will speak to me."

She stopped, observing Sarah's head moving slowly in token of sad negative.

"Alas! no, Kate; I am afraid you hope for too much. Try, try, my sister, to find strength. I cannot, I dare not hide the truth from you; it would be useless."

"Speak."

"She is still insensible; the doctor has no hope that she will be able to speak or recognize anybody before—before she passes away."

Sarah turned away her head, as she quietly drew her handkerchief across her eyes.

Kate and her father drew breath; and then the latter, while he gently patted the head which sank hopelessly on his shoulder, spoke with the air of one who rises calmly above a sea of troubled emotion, rendered almost insensible to his own pain by the spectacle of others' sorrow.

"We came, Sarah Cargill, as soon as your messenger reached us. I trust you have not, out of any mistaken kindness, delayed sending until every chance of Kate obtaining one look from her mother is lost?"

Sarah seemed to be distressed even by the very mild reproach his words implied.

"I have watched all night, sir—watched without ceasing for any glimpse of returning consciousness. I kept the messenger ready, so that at the first sign I might send for you. But she is now in the same state as she was yesterday morning, and as she has continued to be ever since. I sent for you this morning because the doctor has, for the fourth time, administered a powerful stimulant, in the faint hope that it may revive her for even a moment."

"When will the success or failure be known?"

"By twelve o'clock; it is now half-past eleven—two hours and a half since the draught was administered, and only a few minutes now will suffice to show the result."

"Perhaps I had better see her at once," said Mr. Cargill, after a moment's reflection. "The sound of my voice may help the doctor's drug in its work. If she can hear at all, if she retains the least sense, my voice will rouse her."

Sarah stepped from the door, with a look of doubt and dissatisfaction.

"You can try, sir, if you think so; but I would rather that you waited till twelve o'clock—besides, I desire to speak to you immediately on a subject of great importance to myself."

Mr. Cargill had taken a step towards the door; but, as frequently happens with men of stern nature, the calamity which had befallen him had left him weak and indecisive, so that when Sarah suggested that he should wait, he hesitated. Formerly, he would have decided yea or nay in an instant, and waived all opposition aside.

"You want to speak to me," he said, faltering, and looking wistfully at the door; "what is it?"

"One moment, sir, and I will explain."

She went into the sick-room, noiselessly opening and closing the door.

Mr. Cargill turned his eyes sadly to Kate. She had sunk on a sofa, and her head was drooping on her breast. She had slept little during the night, and it seemed as if the intense suffering her cruel position induced would prove too much for her feeble constitution. Her husband in jail, with the shadow of the gallows looming darkly over him, and her mother on the threshold of death, without one word or look for her child—it did indeed seem as if the burden were too great for her young shoulders to bear.

That was the thought which flashed through the man's mind as he looked at her now; and it added another drop of gall to his already bitter cup.

Sarah returned.

"There is no change yet," she said, hastily answering his inquiring gaze. "If Katherine will remain here, the doctor will acquaint her when Mrs. Burnett makes the least movement."

A motion of the head was all the token Kate gave of assent.

"Will you come with me, sir, and I shall explain the matter I referred to?"

And Sarah, with a soft sigh and pitying, sympathetic glance towards her sister, conducted her father to the parlor.

He sat down, as weak and helpless almost as Kate herself, and with a vacant, hopeless look in his pale, sunken eyes.

"Tell me what it is you wish, Sarah," he said abstractedly; "but be as short as you can, and if anything can wait for a—for a few days, spare me the trouble of listening to it now."

Sarah silently bowed her head, and her eyelids, with their long black lashes, drooped over her eyes. She took a letter from her pocket, read it, and then crumpled it in her hand, as if it had annoyed her. Then in a low, steady voice:

"Yesterday, sir, when you told me that your wealth, your name,

and all that you had to give were at my disposal, I refused to accept anything for the present."

"Yes," he answered mechanically.

"I must withdraw that refusal—I must ask your help. Believe me, sir, it is not on account of myself that I do this, but for another."

"What other?"

"I will spare you all details at present, sir, as you desired; indeed, it is better that it should be so—better that I should not explain why I am compelled to ask you to help me, at least until—until Mrs. Burnett—"

He winced, for he divined that the "other" on whose account Sarah spoke was the dying woman. In that way he finished the broken sentence.

"What help do you want?" he said huskily; "tell me that, and leave explanations for another time."

She hesitated, and then, with sudden resolution, "I want you, sir, to give me two thousand pounds."

He looked up with a ray of the keen business man's curiosity in his eyes.

"What for?"

"I thought you did not care to know why just now. Shall I tell you?"

A timid knock at the door, and the girl Susan appeared.

"You're wanted, miss, if you please."

"Coming in a moment." The girl retired, and Sarah went on: "It is a matter which may—"

"There, there," he interrupted, "I don't want to know anything about it—perhaps she has recovered consciousness now. Let us go to her. When do you want this money?"

"Now."

"I have no check-book with me. I will send it to you this evening."

"I have got a stamp, sir, and you can write an order for it. The man to whom it must be paid will be here before three o'clock."

He wrote the order hastily, placed it in Sarah's hand, and hurried with her back to Kate.

As they entered the room the door of the bedroom opened, and the doctor beckoned to them.

"She has moved," he whispered; "she may recover for an instant before the end. If you wish to see her alive you had better come in now."

Sarah's lips closed tightly as with a spasm; Kate started to her feet, and, clutching her father's arm, was supported by him into the sick-room. It was a pitiable first meeting with a mother, insensible,

and past all hope of restoration to the world—a first and last meeting, in which the grief of a life was concentrated.

Kate closed her eyes; the first glance at the haggard, corpse-like face on the bed made her heart bound as if it were about to burst. It seemed to rise to her throat, choking her, and she could not speak, or cry, or look.

Her father held her tightly to keep her from falling, while he, with horror-stricken visage, gazed dumbly on the wreck of the woman he had once so madly loved.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RECOGNITIONS.

SARAH advanced to the bed, and, taking the attenuated hand of the dying woman, looked earnestly into the clammy face. Then she turned away with subdued sobs.

The sound of Sarah's grief roused Kate. She opened her eyes, and there was in them a wild, dazed expression. Then, with a sharp cry of pain, she sprang to the bed and threw her arms round the body, no pulse of which throbbed at her touch or voice.

"Mother—mother! it is I, your child—your own child! Speak to me one word—give me one look before you leave me!"

But there was not the faintest movement, and the daughter's head sank on the mother's breast, with bitter tears and sobs.

Slowly, and with the bearing of one in a dream, Mr. Cargill approached the bed, and the nurse moved away to make room for him by the invalid's head. Gently he took the moist hand between his own—still in a dreamy, half-unconscious manner. But as soon as he had pressed it earnestly something seemed to quicken him to a recognition of the position in which he stood, and, bending down, he spoke fondly in the woman's ear:

"Sarah—Sarah! can you not hear me? Has my voice no power to pierce this cruel insensibility? Sarah, it is I, Robert Cargill, who speak to you."

There was no immediate sign that she heard or understood anything; and the stillness of the chamber of death was broken only by Kate's sobs.

"Sarah," he said again, and his voice trembled this time, "can you not hear me yet? Sarah, give me some sign that you know me!"

Another brief space of breathless waiting for the sign, and it came. As if the voice had travelled a long way to reach her, several minutes had elapsed when the hand he was holding trembled, and then the

fingers closed on his with spasmodic force, and as if she feared to lose it. The muscles of the face quivered, and she drew breath quick and gaspingly.

At last the eyes—dull, dazed eyes with no light of intellect in them—were slowly opened. But they rested neither upon the yearning face of Kate, nor the worn, despairing countenance of the millionaire. Quite vacantly they stared straight up at the canopy of the bed, and what thought the sound of his voice had recalled had wandered away to the old time, years and years ago.

“She may recover yet,” said Sarah, clutching the doctor’s arm eagerly.

He shook his head gloomily. He could give no encouragement to such hope as that.

“She may speak; she may even recognize you and her friends yet; but it is only the last flash of the light before it sinks altogether.”

Her lips were moving even now, as if she were trying to speak; and there was a hoarse, suffocating sound in her throat at every breath, as if something there stopped the passage of air, and intimated how near was the end.

The doctor moistened her lips with some liquid, and it seemed to soothe her. The lips moved more freely after that, and Mr. Cargill bent his ear close to them and listened eagerly to discover what they were trying to say. At last he thought the words were:

“Where is she—she—*my* child?”

“She is here.”

His voice seemed to have more effect upon her this time than before, and her brows became feebly knit as if she were trying vainly to recollect something. But the shade passed in an instant, leaving the visage clammy and blank again, with the big, vacant eyes staring upward. She repeated her question, however, and now it was loud enough for the others to hear.

“Here is your daughter,” said Mr. Cargill, huskily, and placing Kate’s hand in her mother’s.

Mrs. Burnett feebly drew her hand away, and the lips moved as with repugnance.

“No, no! my own child—my baby,” she said, in a feverish whisper, which became stronger as she proceeded; “my baby that he wanted to take from me. Where is she? He did not get her—I would have it—I would not give him my child. Oh, he was cruel, cruel, and I loved him so!—but he did not get my child—no, no.”

“Alas! she is still delirious,” sobbed Sarah.

“Was he not cruel in his love?” Mrs. Burnett went on, with her sad, glazed eyes peering into the dark past. “He said I deceived

him—I, who loved him more than my own happiness—I, who sacrificed everything that a woman cares about, for his sake! Cruel, cruel!”

If she could only have seen how the old man’s head was bowed in shame and remorse—if she could only have guessed how every word stung him to the quick as he stood there listening and humbled!

“He called me false,” she moaned, “false; and he pointed to my own brother as the man for whom I had deceived him.”

“Your brother!” he cried, struck with a new pain.

As if she had heard and comprehended that he was near, she slowly made answer:

“Ay, my own brother, who had come back from India with wealth to offer me a home, and who, discovering what I had become, spurned me from him. And Robert, too, he would not listen, he would not accept any explanation. He called me false, and he, too, spurned me. My God, my God! I was punished for loving that man!”

Her voice faded away as the millionaire shrank back in horror at the denunciation of his own iniquity, at the revelation of the double wrong he had done her.

Her breathing became more rapid and difficult, and as life ebbed from her the memory of years of suffering flashed through her mind, bringing a momentary flush to the white cheeks, making them look so like life that it was hard to believe death was so near.

“I have waited, Robert, waited a long while—years, it seems to me, I have waited for your coming. Will you never come again?”

“Ay, Sarah, I am with you now,” faltered the man, giving her his hand.

“At last,” she said, but without moving her body or looking at him; and although she addressed him, it seemed rather as if she saw him at a great distance from her than as if she were conscious that he was standing by her side; “at last you have come, after all this waiting; but you are not going to take my child from me? No, you will not do that; for I cannot take another’s to my arms and fondle it, and be kind to it, while I have been robbed of my own—not even when you wish to do it that our child may obtain a high position in the world. What do I care for position! My child is all the world to me.”

“She is here beside you now. Can you not see her?”

“Alas, alas!” cried the unhappy woman, as if stricken with pain; “you will not listen to me—you will not listen. Ah, Robert, remember our child will become a woman by and by. Who knows but she may demand from me an account of the past; and what would I say—what would you say? And Jean Gorbali! ah, those letters, those letters!”

Her voice became suddenly sharp, and even shrill, while some inspiration of alarm gave her unexpected strength, and with an affrighted look on her haggard visage she partly raised herself on her elbow. Mr. Cargill hastened to support her.

"Will he get them from her?" she cried; and here Mr. Cargill had an instinctive feeling that the pronoun did not refer to him; "will he *force* them from her? I told them the truth; they turned on me and would not believe; they pretended that I was trying to deceive them again for my child's sake. Yes, my own child turned upon me, scorned me, and cursed me—ay, cursed. Ah, hush! do not let anybody know about that—my child cursed me. Oh, Robert, forgive—forgive me—I had not the courage to resist your command, nor the strength to obey it, and—and—"

As she faltered confusedly over the last word, the door opened quietly, while the clock was striking twelve, and Mr. Hewitt appeared.

Mrs. Burnett's eyes rested on him, and for the first time intelligence shone in them. A cold shiver affected her whole body. The past had sunk from her, and she was conscious of the present. Raising herself with a strength that amazed all who saw, she extended a shuddering arm towards the lawyer, and with a gasp as if her lungs cracked in the effort, she moaned:

"Assassin!"

That was all. Her whole strength had been concentrated in the effort she had made, and instantly she sank back.

There was a brief interval of silent amaze at the strange salutation Mr. Hewitt had received. That gentleman himself had only raised his eyebrows and looked at Sarah; then he gravely advanced and drew her apart, as if to proffer his sympathy in that moment of trial.

Mr. Cargill turned slowly to Mrs. Burnett, and he looked on a corpse.

He sat down on the chair which had been placed for him previously—sat down, holding the dead woman's hand, his eyes fixed upon her, and he became almost as cold and rigid as the one on whom the shadow had fallen.

The majesty of death hushed all tongues, and Mr. Hewitt's presence even was forgotten.

The nurse was the first to move, and she gently drew Kate away from the bed, and into the other room. The doctor, as if reminded of his duty, hastened to attend to Mr. Cargill, and in some alarm discovered that he was in a swoon.

"Fetch some water!" cried the doctor, while with rapid fingers he unfastened the cravat and shirt-collar, and tore open the vest of his new patient.

The doctor, with Mr. Hewitt's assistance, carried the unconscious

millionaire out of the room. Then, by the prompt administration of the proper restoratives, Mr. Cargill's senses were restored.

As soon as the doctor had brought him to that state, he turned his attention to Kate, who was at present folded in Sarah's arms, silent and tearless, while Sarah tried, in the midst of her own grief, to whisper words of comfort and hope. On this occasion, as much as any other, Sarah displayed that quiet firmness of character for which she was remarkable, and which rendered her invaluable as a nurse. Happen what might, Sarah never lost her presence of mind.

When Mr. Cargill opened his eyes they met those of Mr. Hewitt, who was bending over him.

"Are you better, sir?" asked the lawyer.

"Better," he repeated, looking about him as if unable to understand the circumstances of his present position; and then, with darkening face, he remembered all. "Yes, thank you," he said feebly, "I am better. Did you come here to see me, Mr. Hewitt?"

"No, sir; I was transacting some business for Mrs. Burnett—important business, which compelled me to intrude upon Miss Sarah, even at such a time as this."

Sarah herself advanced and whispered in her father's ear:

"He came for the money, sir."

"I understand—you will explain about that by and by, Sarah. Have you any fresh tidings for us in regard to your client—my nephew?"

"I am sorry to say no, sir."

"Ah, well! ah, well! do what you can; spare no labor that money can pay to save him."

"Depend upon it, sir, I will do all that can be done."

"Thank you."

Mr. Cargill rose, assisted by Mr. Hewitt and Sarah. Releasing himself from them, as if ashamed of his own weakness, he turned to her.

"You will see to everything that is needed here, Sarah, and tomorrow I will come to you again, or I will send for you to come to Mavisbank. Kate."

He tottered to her side and offered his arm. It was evident what a mighty effort of the man's will was required to sustain him on his feet, with all the assistance of his staff.

A slight bend of his head to the doctor, and, leading Kate, he passed out. Mr. Hewitt hurried on before to open the door for them, and to assist them into the carriage.

"Mr. Lyon's, Woodlands Road," Mr. Cargill said to the footman; and the latter repeated the direction to the coachman as the carriage drove off.

"Lyon's!" muttered Hewitt, raising his eyebrows, as he stood fin-

gering his watchguard, and observing the receding carriage. "Perhaps he has discovered some evidence that may be of service? No; it is merely the order to see the prisoner they want."

And with a reflective manner he re-entered the house.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CHASE.

BAFFLED at every hand apparently, all help refused him by Mr. Lyon, and even his devoted admirer, Inspector Speirs, disposed to sneer at the sudden change of his tactics, John Hadden was as near the zero of despair as it was possible for one of his sanguine temperament to be.

Thereupon he partook of a sumptuous repast in the nearest hotel, which happened to be in Buchanan Street. Willie Thorne, somewhat awkward in his new garments, and not quite reconciled to a clean face and kempt hair, was seated at the table opposite his chief, and in silent delight devoured the good things which were placed before him. He was even content to wash his face once a day for such fare as this.

As for Hadden, he ate placidly, and with the enjoyment of a philosopher, although a somewhat nervous one. And as he ate he felt his courage revive.

"Ah, Willie!" he exclaimed, "folks haven't quite understood yet how much a satisfied stomach has to do with heroism."

Willie nodded, although he did not see the least connection between the dinner and the remark. However, he thought it was safe to nod and look knowing, which permitted him to proceed with the dinner without offence to his master.

Hadden had been out with his *protégé* late the previous night, and he had been out with him again since an early hour that morning, hunting for the driver of the cab, without success. But now he was already planning the next route they should take.

He would not be beaten. Obstacles should only quicken him to renewed exertion. He had placed the life of an innocent man in jeopardy, and he would save him yet. He had six days left still, and what might not be accomplished in six days by a man of energy?

He summed up the whole position. In what respect had he failed? Were the deductions from his observations in the house at Port-Dundas wrong? No. Was his theory false? No. Where had he failed, then?

"Tavendale is surrounded by the most unlucky circumstances,"

he muttered, clasping his hands round his knee and rocking his body to and fro; "but he is *not* the man. Let me see, now, who are the parties interested in Jean Gorbal's death. First, Mrs. Burnett, to hide her shame from Sarah and the world, and to insure her daughter in the position she had no business to occupy. Well, Mrs. Burnett didn't do it. Who next? Cargill himself, to save himself from the risk of such an exposure as has just taken place. But he did not do the work; true, he might have hired some one; and supposing he could have found an elegant young man with an umbrella, and who smoked Havana cigars with an amber mouthpiece, possessing all the rare qualities of coolness, cunning, and foresight, which this criminal certainly possesses—supposing he could have found such a man for his purpose, would he not have relieved himself of one accomplice to place himself in the power of a more dangerous one?"

Hadden paused an instant to review that proposition, and then—

"Bah! Cargill is a man of the world, and would never be guilty of such folly. Then comes Tavendale, the husband of Katherine—ah, that's the worst of it! he learns that she is not the great heiress he bargained for; that she is about to be exposed to the world as an impostor, a usurper—to be dragged down from the high position of a millionaire's heiress to that of—well, to say the least, the daughter of an unfortunate woman. Umph! yes, I can't shut my eyes to it; he had certainly strong motives for the crime."

Hadden here changed his hands from one knee to the other, and proceeded, while Willie Thorne, satiated and half-stupefied with over-eating, sat staring at his master, and occasionally at the table, with a disposition to pocket the remains of the ample dinner.

"Try back. Jean Gorbal, who was so ready to serve Cargill, would be just as ready to lend her services to anybody else for anything else by which she could make a few pounds without much labor. Well, then, why should it not have been on account of some other affair altogether that she was—removed? As likely as not; and, if Heaven pleases, I shall be glad if Mactier comes back and blows to the wind my fine explanation of the cause of the crime. Yes, I will submit to be laughed at, will submit to be mocked at as an old fool, and I will say my presumption has been lightly punished if they turn me out of the force, if at the same time they will only rescue Alick Tavendale from the hangman's grip."

He suddenly dropped his foot to the ground, and, drawing out his big pocket-handkerchief, blew his nose with such a sonorous ring that Willie started from the doze into which he had been falling, and uttered an astonished "Eh?"

"Those papers," muttered Hadden, not heeding his *protégé*; "if it had been another affair, why should those papers have been burned?"

A person interested in another affair would have no desire to burn them. It won't do; there's nothing for it but to get to the bottom; there's something in it I don't and can't see. But I will see it before I've done."

He jumped to his feet, summoned the waiter, and settled the bill.

"Come, lad!"

Willie reluctantly got out of the easy-chair in which he had settled himself, and followed his patron. They revisited several of the cab-stands which they had inspected on the previous night. They made a tour through innumerable public-houses, and particularly all those in the neighborhood of the cab-stands. Still without success.

At length, as they approached the rank which had been the last they had visited the night before, when they had found more than half the cabs knocked off for the night, or out with fares, Willie seized his master's arm.

"That's him!" he said briefly.

He pointed to a cabman in a jerry hat, who was just crossing from the rank to the Tron Arms tavern, at the door of which were grouped a number of "cabbies," discussing the latest sporting news, badness of fares, and the general ill-treatment their class received at the hands of the public, which, with their misrepresentation by the press, was a growing and unendurable evil.

Hadden darted forward, and, just as the man Willie had pointed out had pushed open the door of the bar, and was about to enter, he tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo!" cried the cabman, looking round, and then mistaking his accoster's object; "I'll be with you in a minute, sir; just come off a long journey, and I am cursed thirsty."

He was about to dive into the bar after that explanation, when Hadden stayed him by taking a firm grip of his arm.

"What's the matter?" growled the man, inclined to become ill-humored by this interference with the acts of a free-drinking Briton.

"Well, if you are so very thirsty as to lose your temper over it," said Hadden, good-humoredly, "come on, and I'll stand treat."

"Will you though, old boy?" cried the man, his vexation vanishing. "Come on, then; you're the right sort!"

They entered; a proper supply of whiskey was obtained and paid for by Hadden. The cabman drank to his liberal customer's health, and then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and with the air of one refreshed.

"Where is't you want to go to, sir?" he said, after exchanging a few words of banter with a smart barmaid.

"You'll have to tell me that."

"Me? maybe you'll tell us how that happens?"

"You took up a friend of mine near the Royal George yesterday afternoon, about five o'clock."

"Did I?"—and the man appeared to reflect by setting his head to one side, and observing his companion from the corners of his eyes.

"Yes; I've lost the address he gave me, and I want you to drive me to the place you set him down at."

"Eh, do ye?"

"Just so, and there's a half-sov. when you land me."

"Ow, a half-sov.," repeated the man slowly, and now eying the coin; "what might he be like?"

Hadden quietly returned the coin to his pocket, and very delicately passed his finger over his nose.

"You're a smart chap—what's your name?"

"Joe Torry, and I'm no ashamed o' it."

"Glad to hear it. Now, then, you remember passing the Royal George yesterday?"

"Surely," was the answer, with a degree of shyness, for the man guessed that there was more in this than a stranger trying to find a lost address.

"And you took up a gentleman about fifty yards on this side of the George?"

"I did."

"What was he like?"

"Tallish chap rather, wi' an umbrella."

"That's the man. Come on, lad; take us to the place, and I'll make it a whole sov."

Joe Torry was not proof against such a temptation as that, so he hastily finished his whiskey and hurried off to his horse. The nosebag was removed in an instant. Joe mounted to his seat, and drove over to the curb where Hadden and Willie were waiting for him.

They took their places, Joe cracked his whip, and away they went at full speed, the detective's pulse throbbing with impatience. He had picked up the clew again, and it should go hard but he would follow it to the issue without pause or new blunder. On rolled the cab, and Hadden's spirits rose at every pace the horse made, for it was bringing him nearer, nearer to the guilty one—nearer, nearer to the rescue of the innocent. There could be no missing of the way this time; the course was clear, and he was driving straight to his object.

The cab stopped in front of a quiet-looking house, the blinds and all the windows of which were carefully drawn, as if somebody lay dead or dying within.

Joe had sprung from his box as Hadden stepped out.

"This is the house, sir, the gent went into."

Hadden looked up: it was Hill Street, and the house the man pointed to was Mrs. Burnett's.

He stared at the house, then he stared at the man, and stared at the house again.

"You've made a mistake, my man," he began feebly, conscious that his head was beginning to reel with the bewilderment and confusion of his thoughts; "that can't be the house."

Joe looked at him with a scowl, for he suspected at once that this was a ruse to save the promised reward.

"Maybe it canna," he responded surlily; "but this is where the chap stopped me, and that's the door he went in at. I saw him go in as I was driving off, and I saw the lass that let him in; and when a chap says a thing, he ought to stick to it."

Hadden did not take the hint conveyed in these last words. He had produced his handkerchief and was busy wiping the cold perspiration from his face, staring hard at the house door.

"Willie," he said, turning to his *protégé*, who had not got out of the cab yet, and showed no desire to do so, "you can stay where you are. Joe Torry, you'll wait."

"Surely, if you say it."

Hadden advanced to the door and knocked. The girl Susan, after the lapse of a few minutes, appeared, with very red eyes, as if she had been crying a good deal.

"Eh, what's the matter, my lass?" he queried.

"Oh, Mr. Hadden, the mistress—the mistress is gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Hadden, his hair seeming to rise on end with the alarming reflection that he was to encounter some new and disagreeable surprise at every step.

"When did it happen?"

"This forenoon, sir. Will you come in, sir?"

"No, thank you, I won't go in just now; you can say I was here, and that I'll come round in the morning. By the way, was there a gentleman here yesterday evening?"

"Yes, sir, the doctor."

"Anybody else?"

"No, sir—oh, yes, Mr. Hewitt was here."

"About what time?"

"A little after five, sir; he came first, and then, as Sarah wasn't at home, he went away, and came back later in the evening."

"Did he come in a cab?"

"The first time? Yes, a hansom, same as that there."

"Thank you. Say that I'll be here to-morrow."

And Hadden slowly re-entered the cab, but his hands were working feverishly with his staff.

"You haven't said where to, sir," said Joe, breaking in upon his bewildered reflections.

"George Street," he answered, with a start; "George Street: I don't know the number, but I'll stop you when you come to the place."

"All right."

"All wrong," muttered Hadden, as the cab moved away; "but we may as well run to the end of the tack. It's another miss, but at any rate I can have a talk with him over the affair."

With that reflection he leaned back and tried to compose himself till he reached the end of the journey.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JOHN HADDEN IN A MAZE.

As the hansom whirled along the streets, Hadden experienced a sensation of giddiness in the head and uneasiness in the stomach, which made him wish sincerely enough that he had never risked his peace of mind in becoming a detective. What were all the petty triumphs he could make, compared with the misery of the thought that he brought an innocent man to the scaffold?

At present his position was a most unhappy one. First, he was convinced of Alick Tavendale's innocence, yet he had supplied the chief proof which was to condemn him. Again, he had tracked a man upon whom he had fixed suspicion, and lo! this man proved to be Tavendale's agent, and the betrothed husband of the girl who was precious in Hadden's eyes as a daughter—Sarah. Certainly, Mr. Hewitt could have nothing to do with this wretched affair.

He signalled to the driver when they were opposite the lawyer's office, and as soon as the cab had drawn up to the pavement he jumped out.

He bade the cabman wait, and he took Willie with him up-stairs to the office. Hewitt's very sharp boy with the very short legs was, as usual, perched on the stool with the long legs, and dismounted with a spring when Hadden entered.

"Mr. Hewitt's engaged, sir—par-tic-u-lar."

"Very well; I'll wait."

And he waited accordingly for half an hour, fidgeting about the place in a restless fashion, to the great amusement of the sharp boy.

Willie planted his back against the wall, and, with his hands behind him, stood there alternately on each foot. His quick eyes followed the movements of his patron curiously, and occasionally

glanced at the office-boy, as if wondering what he could find to do on the top of the high stool.

"Look here, my man; you'd better tell Mr. Hewitt that I'm waiting," said Hadden, at length.

"Yes, sir."

But at that moment the voices, which hitherto had been heard only in a dull drone, out of which no words could be distinguished, rose to a louder key.

"You must do as I say, or go to the devil!" exclaimed Mr. Hewitt's voice, angrily, and both the anger and the words disturbed Hadden; for it was not customary with Mr. Hewitt to display anger with any one, least of all to a client, and the advice which he had just given was scarcely of a purely legal character.

"You know it is not me that presses you," answered a sharp voice, with a slightly nasal twang. "I wouldn't do it myself, nohow. But the old chap says he has waited a good while now; two thousand's only half, and he wants to know where's his security for the other half?"

"I'm going to be married, and he shall have it the day after—curse him!"

"Amen! I'll see how he takes it."

The door of the inner room opened, and a slim, short man came out. He was stylishly dressed, with white hat, blue coat, velvet vest, and trousers fitting tight about the knees; in his blue-spotted scarf was a large pin, the head of which represented a horse at full gallop, and gave the key-note to his character—his style was of the turf, and manner and dress were distinctly "horsey."

He was the hostler of the Royal George.

Hadden's eyes opened, and he nodded to the man, whom he had known as mixed up in various turf speculations of anything but a satisfactory nature. The fellow was indeed pretty well known to the force as Nicol Ogg, *alias* Dandy Nick, who, although he had never been entrapped in any unfair dealing, was suspected to have a close intimacy with those who considered everything fair on the turf.

Ogg nodded familiarly and passed on; but Hewitt, who came out immediately after him, looked for an instant confused on observing Hadden. Then, quickly recovering, he said, in a tone of friendly warning:

"You must arrange your affairs as I have explained, or else I can do nothing for you, and it will be useless coming to me."

"All right," said Nicol Ogg; and in a knowing way he winked and nodded.

Although Hadden's back was turned and he could not observe this little by-play, Willie did.

When the door closed upon Ogg, Mr. Hewitt turned to Hadden and shook him by the hand, apologizing at the same time.

"That is one of my most troublesome customers," he said, leading the way to his private room. "I need not mind telling you that his transactions are none of the cleanest. He makes a great deal of money, and he has been good enough to select me as his agent. I consented, after some hesitation and consideration, and the result has been that I have no end of bother with him."

"Yes, he's a queer chap."

"So queer that I fairly lost my temper with him just now; and I have told him that unless he places his business on a better footing I will have nothing to do with him or his affairs in the future."

"Quite right."

"Have you been waiting long?"

"No; only a few minutes."

"The boy ought to have told me you were here. You would have relieved me of my client sooner," and Mr. Hewitt laughed dryly. "But now that he is gone and you are here, is there anything I can do for you? Do you come upon poor Mrs. Burnett's business?"

"No, no; not exactly. You see this lad here—well, I've taken an interest in him, and I've got a fancy to put him in a lawyer's office. I thought you could help me in that. Come here, Willie, and let Mr. Hewitt have a look at you."

Willie had halted near the door, and beside a small hat-stand, in which were a Malacca cane, silver-mounted, a plain blackthorn, and a slim silk umbrella. This latter object he was quietly examining when he was told to advance to the solicitor. He obeyed instantly.

"A sharp-looking lad," said Mr. Hewitt, patronizingly, "and I dare say he'll make his way. So you would like to be a lawyer, my lad?"

"I dinna ken," said Willie, honestly, thinking probably of the execrations he had always heard vented on lawyers among his acquaintances.

"He'll have to go to school for a few months first," interposed Hadden, hastily; "only I should like your advice on the subject, whether you think it would be worth while setting a lad like him to learn lawyers' business."

"Why not? The work is hard, of course; but to a lad who is steady and persevering there's as good an opening for him in our profession as in any other. In fact, it is not the business or profession a man chooses that enables him to get on; it is his own industry and adaptability to the course he has chosen;" and Mr. Hewitt looked as if he would say, "Regard me, and see what industry can do."

"Thanks, Mr. Hewitt; I agree with you, and I suppose I may count on your helping me to get him a place when he's ready."

"I shall be happy to do anything for you, Mr. Hadden."

"Thank you again; that's just what I expected from your good-nature."

"Oh, it is nothing—nothing. Very happy, I'm sure, to be of service to you."

"That's kind. I was wondering if I could get him into your old office, Martin & Holroyd's. By the way, were you at Mr. Holroyd's on Monday evening last week?"

"Monday evening last week," repeated Mr. Hewitt, reflectively; "Monday evening—oh, dear, no; I recollect now, I was at the theatre with two friends of mine—Mackie and Duncan Milne."

"Of Cargill & Company's?"

"The same."

"Ah, I think I have seen them; I only asked if you were at Holroyd's because a friend of mine was there, and I wanted to know if you had met him. However, about the lad; if you think you could get him into Martin & Holroyd's office—"

"I think I can almost promise you a place for him there."

"I shall be under a great obligation. I won't take up your valuable time any longer. Good-afternoon, and thank you again. Come, Willie."

Mr. Hewitt made a pretence of regretting that he was hurrying away so soon, but in the same breath declared that he was so busy he did not know how he should acquit himself of his multifarious engagements. Hadden was pleased to learn that he was so busy, and would not on any account waste another moment of his time. So while talking he stretched out his hand to lift his blackthorn staff from the stand, but accidentally took the umbrella instead. He did not appear to observe his mistake, and Mr. Hewitt certainly did not observe it, or he would have referred to it.

Before they had reached the foot of the staircase Hadden gripped his *protégé* by the arm.

"Now, Willie, lad, think well before you speak—was that the man you saw going into Higgin's Close?"

"That was the chap, I'm certain sure, though he hadna got the same clothes on; and that was the umbrella he hit me wi' that you've got in your han'."

Hadden looked at the umbrella, and expressed no surprise at the mistake he had made; but a sharp twinge of alarm passed over his face as he looked at the ferrule. It was a patent ferrule, exactly the same as that of the umbrella he had found in Tavendale's lodgings.

He advanced quickly to Joe Torry, who, observing him approach, began to unfasten the nosebag from his horse's head.

"Did you see a little man with a white hat and a blue coat come out ten minutes ago?"

"Do you mean Dandy Nick? Ay, I saw him and spoke to him. He's just gone round the corner yonder."

"After him, quick! I must speak to him."

Hadden and Willie jumped into the cab; Joe mounted to his perch and drove off in pursuit of the sporting gentleman. The latter had turned into Queen Street, and they overtook him at the corner of Ingram Street.

He was not a little surprised, and even startled, when the cab pulled up short beside him. Joe hailed him, and Hadden sprang out, seizing him by the arm.

"What's up?" he asked, as if he were half inclined to run for it.

"Nothing—nothing particular, that is—only I want to speak to you," panted Hadden; and then, putting his arm through Nicol's, he directed the cabman to follow slowly, and walked on with his companion, who did not seem to be delighted by this condescension, for his mind was busy searching for any event which might have brought him within the reach of the law.

"I won't keep you many minutes, Ogg," said Hadden, confidentially; "I only want to know how much he's owing you, and what it's for."

"Who's he?" queried Ogg, slyly.

"Hewitt, of course."

"Oh, him—he's not—"

"Stop! he's paid you two thousand; how much more is it? You see I know something of the affair; and now I'll tell you why I want to know the rest. He is likely to need help. I'm going to help him, but first I must understand the whole business. Go on; how much more is it?"

Ogg hesitated, furtively eyed his companion, and then, as if determined to relieve himself of all suspicion, spoke:

"It's two thousand more."

"That's four thousand altogether—a good round sum. How did he get so deep in your books?"

"It's not my book at all."

"Stop! I know one or two things about you, Ogg; shall I tell you what they are? Here goes. First, you play at hostler at the Royal George. In that position you are able to lay your hands easily on any greenhorn who may have a few hundreds to enter on a good tip for the next race. You provide the good tip, and pocket the few hundreds on the sly; making believe all the while that you never touch a farthing of it, and shoving your old father forward

as the scapegoat. In his name you win money and lend money, and screw money out of the unlucky wretches who drop into your spider's web. Now you see that there's no use keeping up the sham with me, for I know all about it. How did it happen?"

"Easy enough," returned Ogg, sullenly, "and fairly enough. He's been playing the fine gent for the past year; he dropped a lump on the last Derby and the last Goodwood—not through me. If he'd minded what I said to him he wouldn't have lost a rap; but he wouldn't mind me, and he lost. He had to pay, and he borrowed from—my friend."

"Just so. Go on!"

"Well, he's been keeping things afloat with bills, but he hasn't been clearing any of them off; and as I heard he was getting deeper in the books of everybody he could borrow from, I advised my friend to look sharp after hisself. He's been doing that, and so he's managed to get the draft for two thousand."

"A draft—are you sure it's genuine?"

Ogg was startled by the suggestion, and clapped his hands on his breast as if he had been struck. A pocket inside his velveteen vest contained various valuable scraps of paper.

"He wouldn't try anything of that sort," growled Ogg, with blanched face and blue lips.

"I don't suppose he would; but you had better let me have a look at the paper."

"Come in here, then."

All thought of hiding Hewitt's secret from Hadden had vanished from Ogg's mind when he heard that so much was already known to him; but if it had not it would have disappeared now, at the suggestion of a trick in the payment of his money.

They entered a tavern, obtained a private room, and Ogg immediately produced from his secret pocket the order. Hadden examined it, and groaned inwardly when he saw it was signed by Mr. Cargill, and genuine—for the letters Sarah had shown him had made him acquainted with the millionaire's writing. There was only one channel through which Hewitt could have obtained this; and Hadden felt his head reel again with the confused doubts and suspicions suggested to him by the various discoveries he had made that day.

"Is it all right?" asked Ogg, anxiously.

"All right."

Ogg snatched it back, and replaced it in his pocket.

"That's satisfactory, anyhow," he said, with a breath of relief, "and I expect there'll be more in the nest this egg came from. He says he's going to be married, and he'll square up the day after. Is that true?"

"I dare say it is, but I wouldn't say anything about it, if I were you. Keep it to yourself, and make as much as you can out of it."

"I take you; let the others look out for themselves."

"Do you think he owes much besides what he is still indebted to you?"

"Can't say, and don't care. Should think he's in a pretty desperate pass, or he wouldn't be so eager to make me keep my mouth shut—that is, I mean, to make me make my friend keep his mouth—"

"I know—I know about that. Did he ask you to keep these transactions quiet?"

"Rather; he said it would ruin him if they were known, and that wouldn't suit me, nohow."

"I understand, and I too would advise you to keep quiet about it. Don't tell him that you have spoken to me even—at least, until I see you again, and that will be in a day or two."

"A bargain's a bargain, and you'll keep mum about me—eh?"

"If I can—yes."

They parted good friends. Hadden had re-entered the cab, and drove next to the office of Messrs. Cargill & Co., in St. Vincent Street. The clerks had all gone, and the porter was locking up the place.

From the porter Hadden, with the help of half a crown, obtained the addresses of Mackie and Milne. To the lodgings of the latter, in Portland Street, he proceeded first.

Milne was at his tea, and Hadden was admitted to the parlor, where he was presently joined by the gentleman he had come to see. Hadden apologized for intruding, and stated that a matter of importance, which he could not at present explain, required him to ask Mr. Milne several questions.

Milne was puzzled, but, being a frank, easy gentleman, he bade his visitor go on, and he would answer him to the best of his ability.

"Were you at the theatre on Monday evening last week?"

Yes; he had been at the theatre on that evening with Frank Mackie and Laurence Hewitt, the lawyer. They had at first proposed to get Alick Tavendale to accompany them, but on calling at his lodgings he refused. They had started for the theatre. On the way they had met Hewitt. They had adjourned to a tavern and sat drinking together for a good while, and then Hewitt proposed that they should all go to the theatre together. They agreed.

"Did you remain during the whole performance?"

"We did not wait for the last farce."

"Was Hewitt with you all the time?"

"Yes"—hesitating and trying to remember. "By Jove, I got so muzzy with drinking beer and wine that I can't exactly remember. I have a dim sort of an idea, though, that he went out for a while and left us there. Yes, he did. I remember now. Frank wanted to go for some more beer, and asked where Hewitt was; and, as he hadn't returned, we went into the refreshment saloon without him."

"What time might it be when he left you?"

"I'm hanged if I can remember that. I think it was somewhere about the end of the first or second act, and he did not come back till the end of the play. Frank will perhaps remember better than I do, I was so confoundedly muddled."

"Thank you; I will call on Mr. Mackie. In a day or two I shall be able to explain why I have given you this trouble."

And Hadden retired, his face alternately dark with frowns and lit with excitement.

He called at Mackie's, saw him, and received much the same statement as that he had obtained from Milne—with the difference that Mackie was almost positive Hewitt went out at the end of the first act and did not return till the play was over, when he told them that he had come during their absence at the refreshment saloon, and had gone out again to look for them.

"There's the *alibi* if it were needed," groaned Hadden, as he was driven away.

CHAPTER XXX.

IMPORTANT EVIDENCE.

WHEN Mr. Cargill's carriage stopped at the sheriff's house in Woodlands Road, Kate had arranged with her father that he should permit her to see Mr. Lyon alone in the first place. So he remained in the carriage, lying back on the seat, and completely hidden from casual observation, while she entered the house.

She was immediately conducted to the library, where she found Mr. Lyon standing on the hearth, looking with an anxious expression towards the door.

"Miss Cargill," he said, in a low voice that did not seem to be quite steady, as he bent his head.

Never in her happiest days had she appeared to him more beautiful than now, with the shadow of her great sorrow on her face. Her eyes, bright with the traces of recent tears, shone with generous resolution and confidence. He felt that, gentle, timid as her nature was, it had the strength to accomplish a great duty, out of that simple faith in truth which is the basis of the noblest heroism.

With a quiet dignity she advanced to him, extending her hand, which he pressed respectfully.

"We are still friends," she said, with a sad smile.

"Always friends," he replied, handing her a chair.

She seated herself; Mr. Lyon remained standing.

"You know why I have come? to ask you to prove yourself my friend, and help me. I have come to you because I know you are my friend, to confess to you that which I concealed at our last meeting—when—you remember—"

"Yes, I remember all," he said huskily.

She had been too much agitated herself at first to observe his agitation; but she observed now how his voice trembled, and his eyes drooped before hers. She understood how her words must pain him; but they must be spoken.

"You understand, Mr. Lyon, that I would not willingly give you pain; and, being confident of that, I have come to implore you to save Alick Tavendale. I told you that I was bound to him by ties which could not be broken. I tell you now that he is my husband, and you, my friend, having the power, will help me to save him from his present danger."

Mr. Lyon's head was bent low, so that she could not see his face; but she knew by his rapid breathing that he was suffering.

"Alas, Mistress"—he could not pronounce the wedded name at that moment—"Miss Cargill, how can I help you if he is not innocent?"

She slightly rose from her seat, protesting against the doubt with a gesture of her hand.

"How can I help you," he went on, "if it is shown that he is guilty?"

"Ah, sir, you do not think that?" she interrupted.

"I fear to answer you," he said, sadly, "that the proofs are so strong against him as to be morally conclusive of his guilt."

She regarded him in a species of stupor, for his words seemed to have crushed down the hope with which she had come to seek his aid.

"It is hard that I should be the one whose tongue must bid you gather up your strength to encounter the worst," he went on agitatedly: "but it is better, perhaps, that you should hear it from a friend than from others. His conviction is certain."

He had expected some wild outcry of despair, expected to see her overwhelmed with tears, or that she would faint. But he was mistaken. She rose with a quiet dignity and indignation in her eyes.

"You have condemned him already," she cried, "and he is innocent. Alick Tavendale is incapable of this crime, and those who say he is guilty lie. It is false, I say; and if he were standing there

himself, saying 'I am guilty,' I would repeat, 'It is false—it is false!'"

"He has not yet confessed," continued Lyon, deeply pained by the stern task forced upon him, "but he will confess by and by; and even if he do not, the proofs are more than sufficient to condemn him. Listen to me, Miss Cargill, for mine is the voice of a friend. Be silent, and try to reconcile yourself to the thought of what must come in a few days."

"That is to say, you would have me desert my husband in the hour of his sorest need. Yours is the voice of the world, Mr. Lyon, the cold, callous world; but you forget I am his wife, and you forget her duty. When the last friend flies at the shadow of misfortune—when the last relative shrinks back from the ruin, the wife remains to console and sustain."

He could not help admiring her devotion, and pitying its object, while he regretted that the object had not been more worthy of it.

"I may be timid," she went on excitedly, "but I am not a coward; and, if it were needed, I, his wife, would stand beside him on the scaffold, and declare his innocence, in despite of justice and law and the world. You do not know him as I do, or you would not doubt him. From childhood we have known each other's least and greatest thought, and I know that his heart is brave and noble."

Mr. Lyon passed his hand nervously through his hair. His was a generous, honest nature, but he would have been more than human had he not felt the fiery pang of jealousy shoot through him at the revelation of such love as this, which he had once hoped to win for himself, given to another.

"All this may be true," he said, controlling himself, "but justice demands the proof; and although I, knowing you, and respecting you, can credit all you say, your declaration is valueless in the eyes of law."

"Are you sure, Mr. Lyon, that you do not *wish* to find Alick Tavendale guilty? Are you sure that you are an impartial judge of his innocence or guilt? Are you sure that there does not linger in your mind the memory that this man came between you and a hope you once cherished?"

He was startled by the quiet solemnity of her manner; and then he felt indignant at her suspicion, for he had searched his mind through, and found that for her sake he would rather have seen Tavendale free than have seen him condemned for any gain it might bring to himself.

"Miss Cargill," he said sternly, "if you knew what proofs are in my hands you would not wrong me by so grievous a suspicion."

"What proofs are there so conclusive?"

"The very first that occurs is alone conclusive. The murder was

committed between eight and nine o'clock on Monday evening last week. Alick Tavendale left his lodgings about six o'clock on that evening, and did not return till midnight. When he returned he was agitated, and his clothes were soiled and wet. He refuses to take the very simplest means to prove his innocence—by showing how and where he spent that evening."

Katie clasped her hands together, with a half-stifled cry of terror.

"And—and if it could be shown where he was from seven or from six o'clock that evening till twelve o'clock, would that save him?"

"Assuredly."

"Then he is saved—he was with me!"

"With you!" ejaculated Mr. Lyon, astounded by this simple explanation of the most difficult point in the case.

"Yes, with me, at Mavisbank."

"Then the servants, your maid and all, saw him there, and can attest—"

"No, no," she interrupted hastily. "You know that my father had told him to restrict the number of his visits to our house. After I had learned the miserable story of my birth I wrote to him to come to me. He came, and when he knew all, to screen me from the shame that was about to fall upon us in the declaration that Sarah Cargill was the real heiress of my father, he insisted that we should be married at once. On the Saturday the marriage took place. On the Monday he wrote to me, desiring me to appoint an hour when he could see me privately that evening, for, as he had been at the house several times during my father's absence, he did not wish the servants to see him, lest they should talk."

"You made the appointment?"

"Yes, for seven o'clock that evening. He was to come to the door at the foot of the garden, and I was to admit him. I obtained the key of the door, but it had not been used for some time, and when I tried to turn it in the lock I could not. Alick came while I was trying to unlock the door. I threw the key over the wall to him. He tried it, and also failed. Then he climbed over the wall, the top of which, as you know, is covered with broken bottles. The glass tore his gloves and the knee of his trousers. We remained together until I heard twelve o'clock strike, and then I bade him go. We got a small ladder out of the toolhouse, and with its help he went over the wall again. Then I threw the ladder down beside the shrubbery."

"But it began to rain about nine o'clock."

"Yes, and he put up his umbrella till we got into the summer-house. Then he stuck the point of the umbrella in the earth, at the door of the summer-house, and called it our guard."

"May I ask why he desired to see you on that evening?" The

suspicion had flashed upon him that she might be trying to save her husband at the expense of truth.

"He wished me to go away with him at once, and then he was to write to my father and tell him that we were married. I refused."

She answered frankly; he could not doubt the truth.

"Your own assertion of this will not be sufficient. Have you no proofs? Did none of the servants see him?"

"I do not know. Examine them. Here is his letter asking the interview, and you can find mine granting it."

"No; it is burned."

He remembered the note Tavendale was said to have burned. He examined the one Kate handed to him; it bore no date.

"This is not enough."

"There is his messenger."

"Ah, yes, we will find him;" and Mr. Lyon hastily wrote for Inspector Speirs to come to him at once. "Now," he said, as he touched the bell, "I can bid you hope; for if we can find proof that he was at Mavisbank on Monday evening, he is safe."

She gave him her hand, and thanked him earnestly. Then as the servant entered she took her leave, happier than when she arrived, for she had obtained hope.

"Captain Mactier is here, sir, and desires to see you at once."

"Show him in, and send this note away instantly."

The servant retired, and Mr. Lyon seated himself by the table. He had scarcely done so when the door opened and Mactier entered, dragging in by the button of his pea-jacket a stout-set man, whose dress was that of a sailor. He had a round, ruddy, close-shaven face, with honest blue eyes, and earrings in his ears. He bowed awkwardly to Mr. Lyon as Mactier led him in.

"Here's my man at last, sir," said the chief constable, with an air of triumph.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MORE IMPORTANT EVIDENCE.

IF the chief constable's introduction had not been sufficiently explicit of itself, the big earrings his companion wore would have at once proclaimed him the man who had been standing at the door of Jean Gorbals's house on the day of her murder, and who had sent Willie Thorne to Bob Little with the message, "If he's ready, I am."

But before the captain had spoken Mr. Lyon had comprehended all this, for he knew with what persistent energy the chief constable could run an idea and a criminal to the ground. He was a little surprised, however, to observe that Mactier treated his prisoner with

the playful humor he might have shown to a pet bear, rather than with that stern gravity he was wont to show culprits.

"I said eight days, sir," he proceeded, with a chuckle of self-satisfaction, "and here I am, a day before the time has expired, with the thread of this mysterious business in my hand; I have only to unclothe my fingers so, and the thing is clear as daylight."

"I congratulate you, captain. The matter has become so complicated that it will afford me much relief to discover the least ray of light," said Mr. Lyon, quietly, and somewhat wearily; for he had been excited by the interview with Katie, and he had been constrained to exert his will to the utmost to present a calm front to his new visitor.

"You shall be relieved at once, sir. First let me report my course. You are aware that I determined to find the man with the earrings"—here the person referred to made an awkward salute to the magistrate, by bending his body, sweeping his hat from his brow almost to the floor, and drawing back one of his feet, as if he were going to give somebody behind a sly kick. This process he went through at every allusion to him.

"To find him," Mactier went on, "it became necessary to find his friend the boatman first. I found Bob Little, and he gave me correct information regarding the movements of his acquaintance, except that he gave me a false name for him. He called him Samuel Phillips, and stated that he was about to sail from Liverpool in the *Queen Adelaide*, bound for Australia. I went to Liverpool, but the vessel had sailed. I learned from the owners that a man answering the description given had been engaged as one of the hands for the voyage; but his name was not Samuel Phillips."

"You pursued, I presume?"

"I would have done so, sir, but luckily I was brought in contact with the clerk who had been on board when the vessel sailed; and he informed me that up till that moment the new hand had not appeared. My man had not sailed. I commenced again, and soon fell upon his track by searching the boarding-houses about the quay. I was enabled to follow him to London, and then to Southampton, where I laid hands on him. From the statement he made to me it became necessary for me to accompany him to Greenock. There his statement was verified, and we came on here with all speed. From himself you will learn why we went to Greenock, and why I did not put him under lock and key at once."

"It wor kind on you, sir," muttered the man, with his awkward salute, and an expression of simple admiration of the official on his face.

"You do not charge him, then, with the crime?" said Mr. Lyon, addressing Mactier.

"No, sir; but through him I will reach the criminal."

"What is your name, my man?" continued the magistrate, taking up his pen and looking at the sailor.

"Tom Gorbal, sir, seaman, A. B., at your honor's service."

"Tom Gorbal?"

"That's it, sir."

"Were you any relation to the unfortunate woman who was murdered? You cannot be her son, for you must be as old as she was."

"Nigh that, your honor; and I ain't her son, for sartin; but I wor a kind o' relation."

"In what degree?"

The man drew his sleeve across his brow, and a wry twist of his mouth indicated that the subject was an unpleasant one.

"I wor her husband, sir," he said, with a gulp, as if he had forced the words out by an effort of sheer desperation.

"Her husband! Why, we understood her to have been a widow for several years."

"So she wor, your honor, in one way, and so she worn't in another."

"You must explain this, my man; I cannot understand it."

Gorbal gave his weather-beaten hat a twist with his hands, and glanced at Mactier, as if appealing to him to make the explanation.

"Do it yourself, my man," said the captain, nodding to him encouragingly; "Mr. Lyon will understand it better from you."

The man gave his hat another twist, and his honest brown visage darkened.

"I'll begin at the beginning, your honor, and tell you how it came about. Nigh twenty-five years ago, more or less, Jean wor as smart a wench as any in Greenock—the smartest o' them all, I thought, though she wor a bit wild and fond o' larking about. I had a smack o' my own at that time, and wor in a fair way to do well. But I got wild about her, and nought would serve me but to take her for a wife. Mother and friends warned me against it, but the more they warned the faster I stuck to my notion; and we got married a week or two after Jean came back from Glasgow, where she'd been working in a mill."

"Well?"

"Well, it wor all right for a month or two, and then Jean got the wind in her sail again, and set off with some mates that wor the ruin on her—drinking and roaming about. I came back from a trip to Cork and found her at it. I blowed her up, and she wor all right for another spell until after our lad Tom wor born. He worn't more nor eight months old when she broke out again. Worse luck, I had just had half a dozen bad trips; and, to cap all, my smack foundered."

"We didn't live so quiet as a pair o' lambs for a while after that. I wor sulky, and she wor wild—ever a-pointing at me, and telling that she would ha' made her fortin if it hadn't been for me; and I wor thinkin a bit as I'd been better to ha' taken the warning o' my friends, and left Jean to make her fortin. I wor fond o' my lad, or I'd ha' given her a clear berth at that time.

"At whiles we made up—that wor when she wanted to coax something out o' me; and it wor one o' them whiles that she told me as she'd had an offer as would make a fortin for us. I wor glad to hear o' that, as you may suppose; for I wor worried and in debt, without a farthin' to pay it. I axed her where the fortin wor to be made, and I'd help her. 'It's only to take one bairn and put it in the place o' another,' she said, 'and there's a fortin for it.'

"I wor staggered a good bit at that, and blowed her up again. But Jean had a coaxing way of her own when she liked. I worn't a bad man, your honor, and me and mine wor always reckoned honest folk. We wor honest, too, for though we'd had many a hard strait to get through, we'd managed to steer clear o' hurting a mate or cheating one either.

"But I wor hard-up. Jean coaxed and pointed to our lad, that would ha' such a rare chance in life if we'd only a bit o' money. Then she showed me how it warn't anything particular wrong as she wor wanted to do, as it wor only just to lift the babby out o' one berth and drop it into another. Hows'ever it came about, I dunno rightly, but I gave in, with this condition, that I should go with her and see all that wor done.

"That wor settled, and we went to London to a big hotel, where my wench had a confab with a gent, as I afterwards knowed to be Mr. Robert Cargill, the great mill-owner. Jean wor engaged as nurse to a Mistress Burnett. There was another woman, called Lizzie Wood, and she wor nurse to Mrs. Cargill. The trick that wor to be played wor this: Mrs. Cargill's babby wor to be brought into the room where Jean wor nursin' Mrs. Burnett's babby, and the two were just to change hands.

"It looked simple enough that way; but as they were waiting for the chance to make the change, I got time to think, and I looked at it in this way; we changed the babbies; what for? I didn't know; but I guessed there must ha' been some good reason for doing it, or Mr. Cargill wouldn't be so eager to get it done without anybody knowing on it, and to pay my wife a fortin for doing it. Looking at it that way, the thing didn't seem just so simple as the other way.

"So while Jean wor nursin' the bairn—Mrs. Burnett's, I mean—I wor left to watch it sleepin' while Jean wor out. I didn't waste the time, for I tattooed a cross on the babby's arm without a soul on them being the wiser."

“What, did not your wife see it?”

“Not until after it were done, your honor. When she did see it, she looked at me, and I saw there was a storm in her eye; but like enough she saw another in mine, for instead o’ blowing up she went on the coaxin’ tack again.

“‘What’s that for?’ she axed.

“‘Wait a bit and you’ll learn,’ says I.

“She put her arm on my shoulder, and says, in a coaxing-like way, though I saw she wor bilin’ over with spite:

“‘You ain’t going to double on us, Tom?’

“‘I ain’t going to have this thing done,’ says I, ‘for there’s more in it nor we see. I’ve made up my mind that it sha’n’t be done, and I’m darned if I don’t stick to it—that’s all.’

“She stood a minute as if she weren’t sure whether to blow up or go on coaxing; then she says, atween two minds:

“‘Look here, Tom; maybe you’re right, I won’t say you ain’t. But when there’s gold and silver at our feet we needn’t be too proud to stoop and pick it up. Now, here’s the way to settle it, and please all parties, and get the fortin for our lad at home all the same.’

“‘How’s that?’ says I, doubting-like.

“‘Mrs. Burnett don’t want her babby taken from her any more than you do; it’s only the dad as wants the thing done, and the mother she’s skeared to say no. Suppose we go on just as though we were going to do as the dad wants, and, when the time comes, let him believe that it’s done, while we just leave the babbies to their mothers without changing them at all—how do you like that, Tom? We ain’t rich enough, and we ain’t fools enough either, I hope, to throw away a fortin, when we can get it without anybody being a bit the worse.’ “I didn’t like that much better than the real dodge at first, but sure enough it wor a temptation to a man as hard-up as me. The end on it all wor that I agreed.”

“Then the children were not changed at all?” exclaimed Mr. Lyon.

“We settled that they shouldn’t, but I weren’t sure that Jean would keep to the bargain, so I stuck by the babby night and day, barrin’ when it wor in its mother’s arms. I thought it were safe enough there. The day came when the change was to be made, and into the room where Jean and me was stepped the doctor.”

“What was his name?”

“Dr. Largie were his name. He came in carryin’ the babby, and after him came t’other nurse, Lizzie Wood. As soon as they got well into the room, I shuts the door, and sets my back agin it. The doctor didn’t notice me at first. He were looking bad, as though he didn’t care about the job he were about. He went straight to Jean, and offered her the babby.

“ ‘Here, take the child, quick, and give me the other,’ he says, summat angry-like. But I’d got my eye on Jean, and instead o’ movin’ to do his bidding, she kept staring at me. The doctor turned round to see what were the matter.

“ ‘She ain’t going to give you the babby, doctor; and you’re-going to write down on that paper there, on the table, that we haven’t made no change, and that you saw a blue cross tattooed on the arm of Mrs. Burnett’s babby. That’ll serve to prove there weren’t no change, for the mark’ll be there as long as she lives.’

“He looked bad afore, but he looked worse now, and he were going to get into a passion, a-swearing he’d have me turned out of the place.

“ ‘Very well,’ says I, ‘do that, and I’ll go straight to the nighest police-station, and tell ’em what you’ve been up to.’

“At that he looked worse again, and Jean told him what we’d planned. He thought it over a bit, and then he said he’d consent, provided none on us told Cargill. I said we’d promise that, provided he wrote down what I told him. He were doubtful about that, but when he saw that nought else would quiet me, and as he didn’t want to be exposed, and didn’t want to offend Mistur Cargill, he wrote the thing out as I wanted him.

“Then I made Lizzie Wood sign it after the doctor. She were too skeared to say a word. Next I got my wench to put down her name, and I put mine last. The doctor carried away the same babby he had brought, and made Mistur Cargill believe as it were all right, and the job done according to order. To this day, so far as I knows, he believes that it was done, for Mistress Burnett was glad to promise to hold her tongue, on condition that her own child should be left to her.

“Jean and me went back to Greenock; but the money she got from Mistur Cargill, and that she was to lay by for our lad, was the greatest misfortin to her and to me. Whenever I were away on a voyage of, maybe, six weeks, I came back to find every farthing spent. It wor hard to bear, when a man was trying to hold up his head in an honest way. Five years ago I got our lad sent off to sea; and six months after that I went home to find the house emptied of every stick that were in it, and Jean gone off with a drunken shoemaker.

“I found her, and told her that she wouldn’t see me agin, and that she could do as she liked with the infernal fortin she had got from the great mill-owner. We parted then, your honor, and I’ve only seen her once since that time.”

“When was that?”

“By all accounts it were the same day as she were murdered.”

“What did you go to her for?”

"I dunno right, barrin' that our lad were going to get married, and I thought somehow I'd like to see her jest once again. I saw her for about ten minutes, and learned that she had been passing herself off as a widow. That were all right. I'd no objections. I told her that the lad were going to get married, and she said she didn't care; we'd left her to do for herself for five years, and she wanted to hear nothing more about any of us. She'd been drinking, although it were early in the day. She blowed up, and I left her in a rare passion, swearing as she'd have her wish, and that she'd never set eyes on Tom or me again."

Gorbal drew his cuff deliberately across his brow, and gave vent to a long breath of relief, as if he were glad that the job was over.

"I have no doubt that you are an honest fellow," said Mr. Lyon, after a few minutes' reflection; "but you have yourself admitted that, on one occasion, you made a slip, under the control of your wife—that throws some doubt on your information. But, while setting that consideration aside, your whole statement is so singular that we must have very decisive evidence to support it. Where is Dr. Largie?"

"He's dead, your honor."

"Then where is the nurse, Lizzie Wood?"

"She's married, your honor, to Bob Little, and lives in Carron."

"And where is the paper Dr. Largie wrote?"

"That's what me and my mate here"—indicating the captain, who nodded and grinned—"went to Greenock for. I had left it, with two or three little things, in the care of an old pensioner I lodge with when I'm ashore there. Here it is."

He pulled, from the depths of a pocket inside his jacket, a paper which had grown yellow with age and dust. The document was a simple statement that the child known as Mrs. Burnett's was really her own, and had not been exchanged for the child of Mrs. Cargill, as had been arranged. This the mark on the child's arm, made by Tom Gorbal, would testify. It was signed George Largie, M.D., Elizabeth Wood, Jean Gorbal, and Tom Gorbal.

After Mr. Lyon had carefully examined this document, he turned again to Gorbal.

"You said that Mrs. Burnett was acquainted with the secret that her child had not been taken from her. Have you any proof of that?"

"None, your honor, barrin' the letters she wrote to my wife, thanking her for what she had done, and pledging herself as she never would tell Mr. Cargill how he had been tricked."

"Humph! they are burned," muttered the magistrate, remembering the ashes Hadden had found in the grate of the outer room. Clearly, had Tavendale been the guilty one, he would have pre-

served such valuable papers, not burned them. This statement of Gorbals destroyed the motive which had been attributed to the prisoner for his crime, and, together with the assertion of Kate, removed all doubt of Tavendale's innocence.

Who, then, was the guilty one?

As if to answer that mental question, John Hadden was announced. When he entered the room with a worn, humiliated, and yet excited aspect, Mactier could not restrain a chuckle of triumph; for was he not victor in the contest of skill? Hadden perceived the chief constable's satisfaction, but he had no power or inclination to resent it. He saluted him with meek respect, and then asked Mr. Lyon if he had learned anything new.

The result of Mactier's labors was made known to him—the more readily, as Mr. Lyon felt that he had treated him somewhat rudely at their last meeting. During the recital, Hadden sat with hands pressed on his head, moving his body to and fro, as he was accustomed to do when under strong emotion, and uttering an occasional ejaculation of surprise or expectation. When all had been explained he started to his feet, waving his hands, while his eyes seemed to be starting from their sockets.

“Her betrothed husband—in debt—only one mode of escape from being unmasked—only one chance to keep up the show of respectability—the letters proving the truth that would have ruined him burned!—I see it all, I see it all!” he cried, at the close of these incoherent utterances. “Give me a warrant at once!”

“A warrant for whom?” said the sheriff, raising his brows, as if he half suspected that the detective's wits were crazed.

“For Laurence Hewitt, writer, George Street.”

“Why, he is Mr. Tavendale's agent.”

“I know, I know all that; but he is the murderer at the same time.”

“What! are you dreaming?”

“No, no, no—I am awake, I tell you, and during the last two days all my inquiries, all my searching, end with him. I have tried to blind myself to it, but I can do so no longer. Laurence Hewitt is engaged to marry Sarah Burnett. She has shown him the letters she found, as she did to me. He has spoken to her mother, and learned the truth from her. Sarah could not know the real facts; she would be too much shocked by the discovery she had made. Hewitt was to be her husband, and she would believe anything he told her. Do you not see? He was fond of pleasure, in debt, and under the hardest of all necessities, that of concealing his bankruptcy by keeping up an appearance of plenty. Can you not understand how the man smarted and writhed? Then he discovered that only an old drunken woman stood between him and a million.”

"Thanks to my man," said Mactier, complacently, and for once agreeing with his rival, "you have reached the truth at last: I believe that's it."

"Give Captain Mactier the warrant!" cried Hadden.

"No," said Mr. Lyon, deliberately; "we were too hasty on the last occasion, we must not commit a similar blunder this time. We will make some further inquiries, and if they confirm what you have stated, you shall have the warrant to-morrow."

"To-morrow will be too late—he has an *alibi* ready—he has means of obtaining early information of our movements, and to-morrow he will be far beyond our reach."

Thereupon he rapidly narrated all that he had discovered, and, at the suggestion of the chief constable, Mr. Lyon yielded to Hadden's request, and granted the warrant. He, however, cautioned Mactier not to use it until he had made inquiries relative to Mr. Hewitt's movements during his absence from the theatre on the Monday evening.

That was the keenest cut of all poor Hadden had received, for it showed how little confidence was placed in him; and he thereupon determined in his own mind that, this case settled, it should be his last.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AT BAY.

It was almost dark when Hadden and Mactier, accompanied by Speirs, quitted the magistrate's house; rain had begun to fall, and the wind was rising to unusual violence. As the evening advanced the wind and rain swept all passengers within doors. The broad flashes of lightning vividly illumed the dark streets of the city; and the thunder cracked over the houses, shaking them to their foundations.

About midnight the storm was at its worst, and only the few who were moved by the greatest necessity ventured forth.

One of the few was a man in a thick overcoat, the collar of which was drawn up round his neck, meeting the flaps of the travelling-cap he wore, and both serving in a slight degree to protect him from the storm, and to conceal his features at the same time. The latter, indeed, seemed to be his chief anxiety; for there was something in his stealthy, rapid gait which intimated that he was thinking little of wind or rain.

He passed along Renfield Street, and then into Hill Street; he stopped at the door of the late Mrs. Burnett's house; he rang the

bell furiously, and repeated the summons impatiently, without giving time for any one to answer.

A few seconds had elapsed when the door was opened, and Sarah herself, partly undressed, with her rich black hair down, stood on the threshold, shading a candle with her hand from the wind, and peering at the impatient and untimely visitor. With a start of surprise she recognized him.

"What has happened? Why are you here at this hour?" she cried excitedly.

"Let me in," was the husky answer.

She drew back; the man followed her into the house, closing and bolting the door behind him, and further securing it with the chain. Then he seized Sarah's arm, and drew her into the parlor, as if he were well acquainted with the house.

The big, dark eyes of Sarah rested on him with an expression of sharp inquiry, while she seemed to shrink from the touch of his hand, as if influenced by an instinct of horror rather than by reason. He had raised the peak of his cap, and it was with a bitter smile that he released her arm. At the moment, the light she held fell full upon his face, revealing the smile and a ghastly pallor, with a strange something in his eyes which made her draw back a pace, uttering a stifled cry.

The something which had startled her was the look of a maniac, who, finding his utmost cunning outwitted, stands ready to spring fiercely at the throat of the first pursuer.

"You are ill," she said, with more of the woman in her dry voice than usual, although she evidently spoke with a desperate effort to break the oppressive stillness which had prevailed from the moment the key had been turned in the lock.

"Yes, I am ill," he answered, wildly, with a nervous motion of his arms, as if he were throwing something from him; "the game is up!"

"Do you mean that your creditors will not give you a little time? Were they not satisfied with the two thousand?"

"Creditors! ay, my creditors are closing upon me; they will not give me time, they are at my heels now, and they will hunt me down," he said, huskily; and then, with sudden passion, "I am leaving Scotland—a fugitive, an outlaw—will you go with me?"

"Go with you?"

"Ay, will you throw away the fortune that may still be yours, despite my ruin? Will you forsake the luxury, the wealth, your millionaire father can give you, and come with me—my wife in shame and exile, not wealth and high position, as we had hoped?"

He stood in an agony of suspense, awaiting her reply. The placid, respectable Mr. Hewitt had vanished altogether, and there stood in

his place a man swayed by the fiercest passions of human nature—selfish love and great terror.

She stood bewildered, as if unable to understand him, and uncertain how to act. But the bewilderment passed away, and she became cold and calm as on the morning when she had first told John Hadden her strange story.

“Has anything been discovered?” she asked, in steady tones.

“Everything!”

“It is known, then, that you have attempted to take advantage of the accident by which Mr. Cargill’s scheme for the change of places between myself and his wife’s daughter was not effected, and that I have attempted to defraud Kate Cargill of her birthright—is all that known?”

“It is known only that I, being aware of the truth, have for my own gain endeavored to get you recognized as Mr. Cargill’s legitimate daughter. If you like to stay here, it is still open for you to save yourself from the millionaire’s displeasure. Renounce me—tell everything that has happened between us. Let them know that you had seen no more than the letters you showed the old fool Hadden, and that he believed all you said. Tell them that I hoodwinked you, lied to you, and forced you to act as you have done.”

“And you?”

“I will never return to interfere with your enjoyment of whatever fortune may be given to you. Have no fear on my account—you are safe from me.”

He spoke bitterly, as if her rejection of him at the moment were certain; and as if he accepted the revelation of her indifference to his fate as a punishment.

“And you believe that Mr. Cargill will still provide for me,” she went on calmly, “even when he knows that I have attempted to deceive him?”

“He will know that you did not make the attempt wilfully, and so he will provide for you.”

“Then why should you fly? Why not remain, and share whatever he may give me?”

He was silent, and that wild expression in his eyes became more marked.

“Answer,” she said; “why should you fly?”

There was a loud summons at the outer door, which caused the man and woman to start in alarm. He gripped her arm with a trembling grasp, and, bending over her, hissed in her ear:

“That is why I must go. The truth as regards you is known, and the murderer of Jean Gorbai is discovered.”

“In whom?”

“In me—”

She sprang back from him, horrified; and the knocking at the outer door increased in violence.

"It was for your sake as much as my own," he cried, desperately; "the woman held proofs more than enough to thwart our scheme twenty times. She would not sell them; she would not part with them; there was no resource but to remove her or resign the prize we strove for, and so nearly won. Do you go or stay? I have no time for words now—let one decide."

"Had you been poor—had there only been the fraud, I would have clung to you; but—but—"

"But you cannot go with a murderer, you would say. Enough—I go alone."

The sounds at the door indicated that those without were trying to break it open.

Hewitt sprang by his shuddering companion. She clutched at him, and caught the sleeve of his coat.

"No, no, Laurence!" she cried, with the light of a nobler passion than any her nature seemed capable of on her face. "In shame and disgrace I will go with you, for—I love you."

And with hysterical sobs she staggered forward, falling insensible at his feet.

The outer door was yielding, and with a savage growl of despair and rage Hewitt sprang away from the unhappy woman. He threw up the back-window of the lobby, and dropped out in the darkness and rain, just as the door was forced open.

Hadden, the captain, and a couple of constables rushed into the house. But they found only Sarah Burnett lying in a helpless swoon, incapable of giving them any information, even had she been willing to do so.

The open window, however, told them enough for their purpose. The captain and the policemen pursued the fugitive. Hadden, in a half-crazy state of anger with the villain, and pity for the poor creature whom he believed to be the victim of Hewitt's knavery, stayed behind the others to give her what assistance she needed.

He remained with her for two hours after he had succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. She had looked up with wild, pleading eyes into his face, muttering, "Is he safe?" Then she had bowed her head—sullenly it seemed—and had not looked at him again. She did not speak a word more—not even when he bade her good-night, and begged her to tell him if there was anything he could do to serve her. He went away dissatisfied and unhappy.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. HADDEN'S NOTE-BOOK.

WHAT a fool I have been — what a blind, blundering idiot! I won't think of that now. I'll look only to what is before me to do. I have nearly brought an innocent man to the scaffold with my vain theories, my bombastic self-conceit, my mountebank sharpness, which would see farther through a milestone than other people. I am in a rage with myself. So would anybody else be who was so bitterly sensible of bungling stupidity as I am.

But I am punished. I mean to save him, and I'll do it; and I'll write down everything here to be a warning to me as long as I live, never to attempt the solution of another problem which involves human life or character. If I do, may I be—well, never mind. I won't; that's enough. But I'll save him.

Oh, how that mad vanity of my pitiful nature shows itself even in the few lines written here! How many personal pronouns are there in it? An eminent calligraphist, who used to profess to judge character from the handwriting, and to predict the probable future by that judgment, but who made the unlucky mistake one day of signing another man's name to a bill instead of his own, and was convicted of forgery chiefly through my "extraordinary perseverance and astuteness," as the papers called it—this eminent calligraphist, before his departure for the colonies, let me into one or two secrets of his craft. This was one of them:

"Whenever you find a man using the pronoun 'I' twice in one sentence, you may be sure he is a vain man, consequently a foolish one, and therefore a pigeon ready for a cunning man to pluck. My experience has never found that theory at fault. But, mind, you cannot judge women by the same theory. Poor wretches! it comes natural to them to begin or end every sentence with their own or their lover's individuality personified."

He is quite right, and I am a vain man, consequently a foolish one—and therefore, etc.—but I'll save Alick Tavendale, all the same.

Now, let me try to write coolly and sensibly.

Poor Sarah! Poor! Good Heaven—can I, do I, pity her? Yes, I can and do pity her. Whatever may be her share in this dark business, I will not believe she had anything to do with Jean Gor-

bal's death or had any power to prevent it. That villain Hewitt deceived her, blinded her, all the more easily because she loved him so. She is a brave girl, and if ever there was such a thing as heroic, clinging, desperate love expressed by a woman's face and voice, it was expressed by hers when she came out of the faint and asked if he was safe.

Had it been my luck to have been a younger man—had it been my luck to have obtained such a store of affection, how I would have worked and toiled and fought to have made myself worthy of it, to have made a home worthy of her!

But that has got nothing to do with the business in hand. Once for all, let me thrust my own pain and regret aside, and proceed to the narrative of the events in a straightforward, business-like fashion.

Poor girl, she was cruelly wounded by the events of that night. I had no heart to question her—no heart to try to force her to the confession which might have helped us to track the ruffian sooner. The long and the short of it was, I could not ask a single question, although perfectly aware that I was not doing my duty, and that Mactier would have made much of my failure if he had known it. How could I ask her to help in hanging the man to whom she had given a heart that had the strength of any half-dozen women's hearts I ever heard of—except, maybe, Queen Elizabeth's, and she was a fine woman!

I left her without having made the slightest attempt to ascertain anything as to the direction in which he had fled. The truth is that nothing short of the memory of Tavendale's danger, the result of my own bungling, would have induced me to continue the pursuit. Had it not been that he lay in jail with a mountain of evidence raised against him by my hands, there is every probability that I would have become an aider and abetter in the crime by covering Hewitt's escape.

But, although I was ready to sacrifice my duty to the innocent one whose life was threatened, so far as to avoid wringing Sarah's heart, I could not altogether forget, and leave Hewitt to escape without trying to stop him. Besides, I hated the wretch for being such a fool as to sacrifice such a noble woman to his own ambition. That was what he had done—nothing less. For, let the matter end as it might, shame and ruin fell to her portion.

Captain Mactier and his men found the window by which he had escaped from the house wide open. They tracked him across several back-yards and out to the street. They separated, and each took a different route: the captain taking the most promising one himself, which would soon have brought him to the fugitive's heels if it had not been the wrong direction altogether—as usual with the captain.

There was not one of them paused to learn what I might discover from Sarah; they positively ran from the house as if their man had been in sight.

But I did not hurry so. First, because several minutes were necessary to regain self-possession, without which there was little hope of my labor availing much. Second, because a few minutes more were necessary to enable me to settle with myself whether to go on or stop; and third, because there was no advantage to be gained in hurrying.

He had got the start, and he had got clear off. Then the first thing for me to do—since for Tavendale's sake I was compelled to go on—was to discover the direction he had taken. It was too late for him to get a train to anywhere. Would he take a cab? No. An ordinary criminal seeking the best palpable means to outrun pursuit would be certain to do that. But Hewitt was no ordinary criminal; a man who had arranged everything regarding the crime with such precision; a man of education, and possessed of all the resources which a legal training could add to an unusually clear and penetrating intellect, would not, even in the confusion of unexpected discovery, commit such a blunder as to hire a vehicle, which would be like laying down a line for the guidance of the pursuers in his track.

Whatever way he turned he would perform the first stage of the journey on foot.

I was working out this conclusion when somebody touched my arm. It was Willie Thorne. He is a wonderful lad. I foresee a brilliant future for him; he will either be a great detective or a great rascal. He is on the straight road to the former at present; but everything will depend on circumstances.

He supplied the information which I had feared it would require days to discover. He knew the direction Hewitt had taken, and, as I had calculated, he travelled on foot.

Willie had been the first to enter the house, and the first to slip through the open window. He had caught sight of the fugitive as he made his way to the street, and was able to describe enough of his dress to help me to trace him. He wore a large overcoat, and a travelling-cap, with the lappets pulled down over his ears.

The boy, as soon as he had caught sight of him, thought of shouting for me; but he had luckily checked himself, remembering that I could not hear him, while Hewitt would.

Darting out into the street, he knocked against a gentleman who was passing.

He halted, begged the passenger's pardon, and explained that he was running after a friend who had just left, and to whom he had forgotten to deliver a particular message. The gentleman begged

him not to trouble himself about the collision, bowed, and walked on.

Hewitt took the opposite direction with all the speed one in pursuit of a friend might have displayed.

Admirable! The coolness, the aptitude for any emergency, and the courage which could halt to make an apology when life itself was dependent on every instant! Will I ever manage to cope with this fellow?

If I have got any gift of shrewdness or penetration, here is a rogue who calls its utmost effort into action, here is a game that is worth all the petty triumphs of my past experience to win. I begin to feel that it will be possible to retire with some contentment if my exertions are successful in this matter. We shall see.

To proceed with Willie's information. He had thought of running forward and telling the gentleman the real cause of Hewitt's haste, and claiming his assistance in detaining him; but he refrained, cunningly reflecting that he would only get his ears cuffed for his pains, instead of obtaining the required assistance, while he would make Hewitt aware that he was followed.

The streets were deserted, so that it became difficult for Willie to pursue unobserved. He kept close to the wall, and on the opposite side of the street. But there appeared to have been little necessity for that precaution; for Hewitt, walking at his highest speed, kept the lad running the whole way—and he is a good runner. The man did not once turn his head to see whether or not the road was clear behind him.

He got into the Cowcaddens, and at the corner of Wellington Street halted. He looked up and down the street, as if he had not made up his mind which way he would take.

Willie stood in a doorway, with his bonnet concealing the lower part of his face, lest the lamp shining opposite should discover it to the man—everything else was so dark and black. The rain was pattering on his bare head and tossing his shaggy hair. I would have liked to have seen the little rascal at the moment, with his cat's eyes twinkling over the cap at our precious rat.

Hewitt's glance up and down the street showed him nothing but the dark houses frowning at him, and pools of water shining under the lamps and spattering under the heavy rain. He heard nothing but the pattering of the rain and the wind rushing up the street and whistling up the closes. At any rate, I can't fancy how he could have seen or heard anything more, considering that the stormy night had driven not only every citizen but every policeman—who should have known better—to seek shelter.

That accounts for the runaway getting such a clear course. If it had only been a dry night, he would have been stopped before he

had made half the distance. But policemen have no more relish for ten hours' parade in a wet suit than other people, and no stronger constitutions to stand it. At the same time, it's thunderingly annoying that they have not.

Whether Hewitt was satisfied with his inspection or not he did not stand long. It's my opinion he had every step he took planned beforehand, with the same mathematical precision he had planned the details of the murder. He had laid down exactly what he was to do in the event of success or failure, in the event of the best or worst, so that, however things turned out, he could not be taken by surprise.

He started in the direction of Buchanan Street. He chose the most important streets for his flight.

That amazed me for the first minute or two after hearing it; and I stopped Willie till I had time to think it out. When I had thought it out it only added another grain to my admiration of the villain's cunning.

A bungling rascal, who is always being found out, would have crawled through all the lanes and closes in the town to his destination; and, twenty chances to one, in some dark corner he would have been pounced upon by a brace of our men. First, because it was a dark corner, and the natural inference would be that he had no business to be there; and, second, because our men, having had so much to do with such bungling rascals, have got the stupid idea fixed like a rock in their minds that there are no rogues in the daylight.

That's the kind of idea which made Mactier miss the grandest triumph of his career.

Hewitt, not being a bungling rascal, selected the broadest way he could find for his route. First, because it was the quarter in which he knew he would be most free from the observation or interruption of the most vigilant of the force.

So, while Mactier and his men were burrowing in the purlieus of the town, here was our fugitive walking coolly along its highway.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MORE OF MR. HADDEN'S NOTE-BOOK.

Tracked.

HE proceeded to the Royal George Hotel. The house had, of course, been closed for several hours, and all lights were out. But there was no gate on the entry to the stable-yard, and into the yard stepped our man, Willie crawling after him.

It is an old-fashioned place with some old-fashioned habits. The

hostler, when he is where he should be—and I, knowing something of his character, may say, mildly, that he is often where he is not expected to be—but when he is at home he sleeps in a room above the stable.

The door of his crib is reached from the yard by a flight of narrow stone steps, much the worse for many years' wear, and, in consequence of their not being protected by a railing, rather dangerous to any man who happens to be unsteady on his legs. The steps were all the more dangerous when the yard was in such a state of darkness as that of this stormy night when Hewitt entered it.

The place was so dark that Willie could not see him at all, and could only track him by the sound of the light fall of his steps; and he was not a little afraid that any accident might cause him to stumble against our man.

But he is a sharp lad, and he did not make a step himself until after he had heard the sound of Hewitt's. When the sound stopped he stopped, and one of the pauses was so long that he began to fear that he had missed his prey altogether.

He became restless, but he did not move. He set his teeth together, and held himself down steadily in the one spot. He strained his eyes trying to see through the darkness. That did not help him; and at last he was on the point of running out of the yard to search the street, when he heard a thud like the soft part of the clinched hand striking against a door.

He crept towards the sound three paces and waited.

It was repeated.

Three paces more, and he waited until he had counted seventy-three. Then there appeared a thin streak of light just above his head, and he crouched down at the foot of the steps leading to the hostler's crib, at which point he discovered Hewitt by the feeble streak through the chink of the door.

"What's the matter now?" was growled out from behind the door, as the bolt was drawn and the latch raised.

Hewitt pushed open the door and rushed in, and the door was closed again. Willie heard the bolt shot into its socket, or fancied he heard it. At any rate, he ran the hazard of detection, and darted up the stair in time to hear the hostler's exclamation of surprise and recognition:

"Hullo! what the devil brings you here?"

Willie flattened his ear against the door.

"All right, Nick," was Hewitt's answer, in a tone that was sharp and yet conciliatory; "I wanted to see you on business, and as I am leaving the town in a hurry, I had no help for it but to rouse you up."

There was no response to this for a minute, and, in spite of wind and rain, my lad fancied he could hear the two men breathing heavily. Then—

“Let’s have a look at you,” said Nick, and the light moved as if he were holding it up to the man’s face. “You look queer—haven’t had a split with your rich wife that is to be?”

“No.”

That was a hard, steady negative, and implied that he was ready to knock any fellow down who dared to say anything to the contrary.

“Haven’t come to ask me to hold over that balance of the two thousand again?”

“No.”

The light was set down on the floor. Willie could tell that by the movement of the streak that was shining through the chink.

“Then what the blazes have you come about?” exclaimed Nick, as if he were disposed to become angry at the short answers he received, and at his failure to guess the particular object of this late visit.

If I had been there I would have guessed that he wanted to put off time so as to let the heat of the pursuit pass before he ventured out. And I would have been as much mistaken as my friend Dandy Nick was in his guesses.

Hewitt gave a sort of laugh which made my lad’s flesh creep. He said it was more like the rattle in a dying man’s throat than anything else he had ever heard.

“I’ll tell you fast enough,” he answered, when he had got his horrible croak over; “but first, have you got anything to drink, or a pipe?”

“I have nothing to drink here, but I have a pipe.”

“Well, give us a puff. I want a stimulant of some sort.”

There was silence for a little while, and then the smell of tobacco.

“Maybe you’ll tell me now what lark you’re after?” cried Nick, as if he were getting into a worse humor than before.

“All right; hurry no man’s cattle. You see how cool I am sitting here, smoking my pipe of peace, while half the peelers in the town are whooping after me.”

“What for?”

Nick’s voice sank to a terrified whisper as he made the inquiry. That’s the one good quality in this rascal’s character; his little, shrivelled soul has a fine sense of the majesty of the law.

“Would you very much like to know?” rejoined Hewitt, jeeringly.

How can the fellow have cultivated such enormous coolness? I can only imagine it the result of the mathematical accuracy of every step he took and of every word he uttered.

"I would—I shall—I must know this minute!" almost shrieked the other.

"Very well, don't get into hysterics. I'll tell you. Put out the light."

"Why?"

"It may be seen outside, and we may have more visitors than we want. Blow it out."

"I won't; and the more who see it the better for me, and the sooner you get out of this the better for you. I've got eyes, and it doesn't need a cuter chap than me to see that there is something more than two or three months in quod will pay for on your shoulders. I am not going to have myself implicated; so clear out of this, if you don't want me to holler out loud enough to bring them same peelers you told me about within arm's reach of you. Now, I give you two jiffies to get out."

Nick spoke boldly enough, but he was shivering all the time. And it must be owned that to be alone in a stable-loft with such a man as Hewitt, with such a look on his visage as he must have had, was not a pleasant position.

"Very well," was the perfectly quiet answer, "I'll go; but if I had known that you were such an infernal coward, I would not have troubled myself about the account I came to settle with you to-night."

"The two thousand—have you got it with you—the whole of it?" cried Nick, his greed getting the better of his terror.

"Yes, the whole of it. Look at that—keep your hands off, though."

"Another order for two thousand, signed by Robert Cargill?" said Nick, eagerly, and astonished. "That's the ticket. Tip it over."

"Thank you. In the meanwhile I'll tip it into my pocket, and when you have done what I want you to do, then I'll give it to you."

The hostler spoke sulkily after that.

"What do you want me to do? Haven't I done enough for you! Haven't I put myself into all sorts o' scrapes for you to get that cash and save you from bursting up long ago? You know that if it hadn't been for me your black cloth coat wouldn't have saved the respectable dodge you have been carrying on this long while. If it hadn't been for me there's not a man in the town who wouldn't have known the steady, mealy-mouthed Mister Hewitt to be what he is, a beggar who had got on a horse, and was riding to the devil."

Hewitt laughed again, and then, with the utmost contempt, he said:

"Bah! A sermon from Dandy Nick is a treat, but I cannot afford time to hear more of it at present. I'll tell you what I want. I am going to Edinburgh. I will not trouble you with my address; but I wish a certain lady to know where to communicate with me."

"And who is she?"

"Miss Burnett, Hill Street. I can write the note on a leaf of my pocket-book here, and I can trust you with it open for two reasons: first, because in spite of all your cunning you will not be able to read it; and next, because if you attempt to play any trick with me you will never see a penny of your money."

"Supposing I don't want to be trusted with it," snarled the hostler, sulkier than ever, "and supposing I won't go with it, what'll you say then?"

"Say? Why, good-bye, and you may say good-bye to your cash at the same time."

"But suppose you don't get the chance of saying good-bye? suppose I won't let you budge one foot from this place till you hand over that order?"

"You're an ass, Nick."

"Oh, you think so," said he, feebly sarcastic.

"I'm sure of it," Hewitt went on, quite calmly; "because a man of my nature, in my position, would strangle you at the first sign of an intention to raise the alarm."

"Then we'll try it."

There was a rush, and the door shook as if the hostler were trying to open it, and was suddenly hurled back; there was a sound as of a man falling on the floor. Then Hewitt's voice, still undisturbed:

"I told you that you are an ass, Nick. Now take your choice: do as I bid you and get your money, or take your own way and lose everything."

"I'll do what you want," answered Nick, huskily, as if he were choking.

For several minutes neither spoke. Hewitt appeared to occupy the time in writing the note, which he now gave to the unwilling messenger.

"Take that to Hill Street," he said, "and mind what you're about. The house is most probably watched; see that you don't fall into the hands of the beaks; and don't let yourself be dodged in coming back to me here."

"Are you to wait here?"

"I can't think of a safer place. Off you go; the lady will not be in bed, and so you can ring the bell as quietly as possible. She has had one fright to-night already, and I want to know how she stands it without giving her another. Come back sharp, as I must be on the road to Edinburgh in another hour."

"Are you to walk?"

"Perhaps I'll borrow a horse from you."

Nick muttered something which my lad did not hear; for, having discovered where Hewitt was to wait and where the hostler was going to, he thought it time to start, so that he might be at Hill Street before Nick.

He managed that, and found me waiting, in the quandary about the whole business which I have described. The hostler was delayed on his journey to Hill Street, and so, previous to his arrival, Willie had time to explain all the foregoing, which I have amended by information subsequently received.

My plan was speedily arranged.

I took Willie with me and planted him near the corner of the street, at the mouth of a dark close. As soon as he saw Nick Ogg enter the house he was to run for a couple of constables.

Then I walked up to Sarah's house—poor lass, I wish it could have been done any other way—and knocked quietly. The girl, Susan Barr, opened the door on the chain and peeped out from behind her apron, with which she had been rubbing her eyes furiously.

"Open, Susan, and let me in," I whispered mysteriously; "it is for your poor mistress's sake."

And so it was, Heaven knows; for surely it was the duty of anybody who cared a pin for her to save her from further contact with that scoundrel.

"Oh, sir, she's awfu' bad!" sobbed Susan, who knew nothing of my share in the late disturbance; "an' she's locked her door since you gaed awa', and she'll no speak a word."

The chain was unfastened, and I stepped into the lobby, closing the door behind me.

"Don't disturb her just now, Susan, by saying I am here. All I want to do is to prevent a man who is coming from seeing her and annoying her. She has had sorrow enough for one night."

"It's very kind o' you, sir, and I'll do just as you bid me."

"That's right; you are a sensible lassie."

Now I have him, safe and sure.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MORE OF MR. HADDEN'S NOTE-BOOK.

Success so far.

I GAVE Susan the necessary instructions. I did not flatter her when I said she was a sensible lassie. She would have been a very sensible lassie if it had not been for an excessive disposition to rub

her eyes, sigh "Oh, sir, it's awfu'!" and blow her nose at the same time. This disposition, besides producing a rather discordant noise, rendered it a little difficult to explain anything to her. She understood me at last, and with some effort managed to keep quiet.

I went into the parlor and took my place beside the window. Susan sat down near the door. Poor Sarah was in the next room, making no movement or sound of any kind. I wonder now what she could have been doing, for she was as still almost as the body of her mother, which was lying cold and silent in the bedroom.

The worse things turn out for the best sometimes, and perhaps Sarah's loss was one of those worst things.

I raised the window-blind about half an inch, and by the help of a street lamp opposite I was enabled to observe the door.

I watched steadily for a quarter of an hour, and yet the hostler had not appeared. I began to fear that some accident had happened after Willie had run from the stable-yard, and that Nick was not coming.

Still I did not doubt that he would come, unless he had a great deal more respect for public justice than I ever accredited him with. In that case he might have gone in search of Captain Mactier, and delivered the criminal over to him at once. That was not in the least likely, considering that he had such a large sum of money at stake.

But I am nervously inclined to look at the worst side of things, and to doubt success even when it is within my grasp. Like Napoleon the Great, I prepare for defeat.

I felt myself pretty sure that Nick would deliver his message; and I felt pretty sure also that Hewitt would not stir from his hiding-place until he had received the answer. Not that I believed him capable of a regard for Sarah half strong enough to make him risk his own worthless neck on her account; but I believed he would require her assistance. Or, worse still, he might be mean enough to doubt her affection, and consequently he would be anxious to assure himself—on his usual mathematical principles—that whatever happened she would not give evidence against him.

Faugh! how little a bad nature can understand a good one!

I was sure he would come, and he came. At the first glimpse I caught of the hostler's wiry little body I dropped the blind.

"Now, Susan, there's the man; keep quiet and do as I told you."

There was a timid sort of a ring as I spoke; and Susan, having blown her nose quietly to intimate assent to my wishes, stepped into the lobby. She had a candle and matches ready, and struck a light. I should have observed before that we purposely remained in the dark.

While Susan proceeded to answer a second summons of the bell,

and a more decisive one than the first, I slipped over to the door of Sarah's room and listened.

Not a sound, not a movement. There was a light burning in her room—I was sorely tempted, and I yielded to the temptation.

I peeped through the keyhole.

She was sitting before the table, the light drawn close to her, and her hands, resting on the table, clasped a bundle of papers. Letters? No doubt, and letters from him.

Her face was as white as chalk, and as hard-looking as if it had been one of those wretched little cast-iron ornaments you see in kitchens. She had been sitting that way for hours, I suppose, with all the dead hopes crushed there in her hands; with her whole heart and body frozen. I do not like to look upon death, but I would rather have spent a week in a family tomb, with all the coffins uncovered, than have looked for that one moment upon her living face, with its cold, dead calm.

I was glad to hear Susan's voice. It recalled me to business.

I drew back from Sarah's room, and stood at the end of the lobby, listening to what passed at the outer door.

"It's a note for Miss Burnett," I heard Nick say, nervously, "and I must have an answer."

"My mistress canna be spoken to the nicht, but you can leave the note and ca' back in the mornin'."

"That won't do. The gentleman can't wait. I wasn't to leave without the answer."

"Very well," answered Susan (playing her part admirably), "if ye'll come in a minute I'll gi'e her your message."

She opened the door, and permitted the hostler to enter. She locked and chained the door before leaving him. Then she left him standing in the dark, and brought the note and the light to me.

The note was simply a leaf of an ordinary pocket-book, carefully folded. I opened it at once, and read:

"I am safe. Say nothing, and wait."

I turned the paper over and over, but could find nothing more than these words. That puzzled me, for the information Willie had given me had led me to expect some mysterious writing in cipher which would have given me the clew to the place where Hewitt proposed to hide himself, in the event of his escaping me at the stable.

I began to suspect a ruse of some sort, but of what sort I could not form the least idea, and I had no time to give the matter sufficient consideration at that moment. I knew him to be capable of the most unaccountable manœuvres — unaccountable, that is, to a second party, but perfectly clear to himself, and definite in their aim.

Prompt action became all the more necessary. I took the candle

from Susan, and marched out to my friend Nick. I held the light up, so that he might see my face at once.

He recognized me, and at the same moment gave a snort like a pig alarmed, wheeled about to the door, attempting to open it.

"Don't be in a hurry, Nick," I said; "I have got the key here, and I will let you out in time enough."

He saw that he was in a trap, and like a sensible fellow submitted—very doggedly, though. He fumbled in his trousers pockets with his hands, then suddenly began to button his jacket, as if he had no time to lose. He nodded, scowling as if he would have liked to have eaten me.

"I didn't expect to find you here, old fellow," he stammered, with mock familiarity and friendliness.

"The pleasure is all the greater in the surprise," said I, jokingly. "I always like to do business pleasantly. You need not be uncomfortable, however; there is no harm meant to you."

"I am not the least uncomfortable; there is nothing I have done as I'm afraid of."

"I'm glad to hear it, as in that case you won't object to come with me."

"Where to?"

"Only as far as the stable-yard of the Royal George. You've got a friend of mine there whom I have some particular business with."

The thought of his two thousand pounds which he had so nearly regained, and which he was now so likely to lose altogether, flashed across his mind. I could see it by the twitch of his mouth, as he plucked up courage for a bold falsehood.

"There's no friend of yours there that I know of, and I'm not going to the stable to-night again."

I put my hand in my pocket, and produced the prettiest pair of bracelets he had ever seen. I held them up to let him have a good look at them; and they made a decided impression. He shrank back as far as he could get, and stood watching me, like a whipped cur who would like to show his teeth and dared not.

"Now, I mean these ornaments to be devoted to the special use of the friend I refer to," was my friendly intimation; "and I don't want to have the trouble of using them until I meet him. So be sensible, Nick, just to oblige me."

"You've got no right to use them on me; and if it comes to that we are man to man, and you are an old one."

"Ay, but a tough one. We won't argue that, though, because you're wrong again. There are a couple of gentlemen waiting outside to take part in our amusement."

He gave a suppressed howl, and began to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

"There's a fortune lost," he whined; "the money as I've worked hard for, and come honestly by—it's a damned shame that I should be the loser on his account!"

"You'll lose a great deal more if you don't take my advice. Come now, are you to be quiet, or am I to use force?"

"Well, do as you like—seems to me as if I was born for nothing but to be kicked about by everybody."

Knowing Mr. Ogg's character, and knowing that the money which he was about to lose was come by in some gambling transaction, I had not much sympathy for him; but I did pity the hysterical struggle of his greed with his terror of the law.

I went back to Susan, and bade her not say a word about this transaction to her mistress. Then I unlocked the door and passed out with the hostler.

On the doorstep a couple of constables were waiting for us; and that spectacle completely disposed of any thoughts of deceiving me which Nick might have entertained. He became submissive as a lamb.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MORE FROM JOHN HADDEN'S NOTE-BOOK.

An Astounding Failure.

I took his arm and marched him to the Royal George. The men followed us, and my lad Willie brought up the rear. At the head of Buchanan Street I met one of Mactier's men. I sent him in pursuit of the captain, to tell him to join me at the stable-yard of the inn, or at the Central Station.

Everything was quiet about the inn and the yard. Upon entering the latter I glanced towards the door of the loft. As I expected, the light had been extinguished.

In the centre of the yard I called a halt.

"He will have the door fastened, I suppose," I whispered to the hostler.

"Ay, he's got an iron bar to put across it on the inside. I had to search for it before I left him."

"Is there any way of getting out of the loft except by the door?"

"Only by the skylight and along the roof. He might drop on to the shed and then to the ground."

"All right. You go up first and get him to open the door. I will keep behind you while my friends watch the skylight."

He obeyed, and sprang up the stair to the loft at once. He tapped at the door, and gave the word agreed on between him and Hewitt.

“Open, the answer’s here.”

I was beside the hostler, but in such a position that the lintel would conceal me on the first opening of the door. I did not care about giving my man the chance of pitching me over the landing.

I waited, holding my breath for several minutes, and there was not the least sign of the door being opened. I gave Nick a nudge, and he repeated his summons.

Still without effect.

I began to suspect that there was something wrong, and I touched the hostler on the shoulder.

“Are you quite sure you have given the signal agreed upon?” I said, under my breath, and with as much significance as possible.

“May I never stir if I have not done just as we arranged!” he answered, imitating my caution, and evidently alarmed at my suspicion.

“Try it again, then.”

He did so, and with no better result, although he shook the door and spoke loud enough to be heard all over the yard.

That looked queer. I bade him procure a ladder, and he got one out of the shed; then one of the men mounted to the roof while we stood guard at the door.

The constable lifted the skylight, and still there was no movement within the loft. The man shone his bull’s-eye down into the place, and presently cried out,

“There’s naebody here.”

That was a startling announcement. I bade him jump in and open the door. Two minutes sufficed for that, and I darted into the loft. I seized the bull’s-eye, and bade the man keep hold of Ogg, who, when I shone the light on his face, was shivering, and looking as much bewildered as myself.

I searched every corner, only to convince myself that the bird had flown.

I was inclined to swear and get into a passion with everybody. It is not easy even for the most placid temper to stand such a disappointment as this coolly, and mine is not a placid temper. To think that I should have my hand upon him, and that he should slip through my fingers in this mysterious fashion, was—well, to put it mildly, it was a bitter pill to swallow.

I sat down on a large box which was placed just beneath the skylight, and endeavored to collect my senses, which were utterly confused. At the same time I stared viciously at the hostler; and he, poor wretch, was the means of bringing my scattered senses together.

“I see how it’s been,” he shouted. “That box was standing in the corner over there, and he has drawn it over here to reach the

skylight. It's a heavy one, and it must have taken him some time to shift it by himself. I don't believe he meant to wait for me coming back at all; and like enough he has stolen a horse and is off to Edinburgh."

I jumped up. I began to understand the movement. The few words contained in the note to Miss Burnett required no answer. Hewitt had only desired to assure her of his safety and to engage her to give no evidence against him. He had made Ogg his messenger because he was the only man whose services were at his command, and by getting him out of the way he was enabled to procure a horse.

He had gone out by the skylight in order that the discovery of his absence might be delayed by the difficulty of opening the door. As usual, his cool calculation of possibilities and probabilities had overreached us. But there was a chance yet. He could not be far on the road, and a man with a horse could not easily make himself invisible.

"Come on to the stable," I cried, and ran down the stair, followed by the others.

Nick was muttering curses upon the fellow who had tricked him and robbed him, as he put it, and seemed now to join heartily in the pursuit.

The stable-door was locked. That was another puzzling circumstance; and yet, no, it was not puzzling. He had taken a horse, locked the door, and taken the key with him in order to put another obstacle in the way of discovery.

Nick suddenly darted up to the loft again while we were trying to force the door. Presently he rejoined us with a bunch of keys in his hand.

"Here they are," he said.

I snatched them eagerly, asking: "Where were they?"

"Where I left them — seemed to me as if they hadn't been touched."

The stable-door was opened and we entered; there was nothing disturbed, and not one of the horses was missing!

Now I was brought to a standstill. What was the meaning of all this?

Was the man about the place still? or was it all a stratagem to conceal his real movement, whatever that might be? If a stratagem, how was it to work? in what direction did it seem to point, and in what direction did it really point?

It seemed to point to the conclusion that he had started for Edinburgh on foot, as the means by which he might perform the journey with the least chance of attracting attention; or that he was still hiding somewhere about the premises.

Just because that was the apparent conclusion, I became satisfied that he had neither started for Edinburgh nor was he hiding about the place.

The process by which I had arrived at this conviction was very rapid. I had leaped to it, as it were; I had not time to argue it out. My chagrin and my perplexity had nervously excited me, and I determined to pause. I felt that a breathing-space was imperatively necessary, for I never made a step yet in such a high state of excitement as this, but sooner or later I found myself on the wrong tack. In this business I had too much at stake to risk even the chance of missing a step.

Therefore I said to myself: "Now, John Hadden, be cool; don't be in a hurry—be cool. There are several threads lying in the dark here; take time and pick them up one by one."

I had just settled that little matter with myself when Captain Mactier and three of his followers arrived. A commotion was the result. In his usual determined manner, the captain, instead of accepting a plain statement of the whole business from me, which would have occupied about ten minutes, insisted upon investigating the whole affair for himself, and occupied about an hour—wasted about an hour, I should have said—in cross-examining everybody except me.

When he had finished I volunteered an explanation.

"No, thank you, Hadden," he said, sharply. "You and I have been on different tacks in this business all along; we'll sail our own courses to the end of it. All I want from you is to see that note you got from Nicol Ogg."

After that, of course, I was not disposed to say anything. He knew that he had the upper hand of me, in consequence of my first blundering stupidity, and I felt that I deserved any reproach. Yet my deductions had not been altogether wrong; my great error lay in the haste with which I had accepted the conclusion to which Hewitt's schemes had led me, and even forced me. Hence I had fallen into the trap, and bungled all my own efforts by the one huge mistake of identifying Tavendale as the man who was wanted.

But I don't wish to excuse myself; all I wish to do is to save him.

Without a word I gave Hewitt's note to Mactier. He made a copy of it, and handed it back to me.

"Now," he said, turning to his men, "begin with the loft and search every corner that can hide a rat, from one end of the premises to the other."

Half a dozen bulls'-eyes were turned on, and the search commenced, the captain leading it. That was precisely the first step I had expected him to take. I waited to see what would be the second.

My lad Willie saw that there was something wrong with me, and with an expression of—I must, I suppose, call it affection, for which I had not given him credit, he, instead of joining in the search, seated himself on a bag of corn, and, in a drowsy, wistful way, kept his eyes fixed on me. I was grateful to the lad: it was something when at that moment everybody seemed to distrust me, and all my plans and calculations seemed to have so miscarried, it was pleasant to feel that there was one creature who still believed in me. I sha'n't forget that look of confidence and faith in a hurry; it came just at a moment when it was needed to save me from losing heart altogether.

I closed the lantern I had in my hand, and then I patted him on the head.

“Why don't you go with the others, Willie?” I said; and very likely my voice sounded queer, for he seemed to rouse up, and tried to get a glimpse of my face.

“What's the use o' gaun wi' them?” he answered; “the chiel's no here.”

I patted him again.

“That's just what I think. And where do you fancy he might be?”

“I dinna ken; but he's no here.”

It was ridiculous, perhaps, but I felt the greatest satisfaction and consolation from this confirmation of my own views.

In half an hour the search was completed, and with the result Willie had foretold. The captain, however, did not appear to be in the least disappointed; and, as he came into the stable, I heard him telling the hostler to saddle a couple of horses.

“You have not found him?” I said mildly.

Mactier turned his light full upon me, to see if I was sneering at him; and, being satisfied that I was not, he answered hastily,

“No, I did not expect to find him here; but I like to make sure at every step I take.”

“Then where do you expect he is?”

“Where?” exclaimed Mactier, as if amazed at my stupidity. “He's on the way to Edinburgh, of course; and if I don't collar him on the road, I'll have him in the city. He's got Cargill's order for two thousand; he knows he can get that cashed in Edinburgh by some friend, and then he'll make across the water. What are you going to do?”

“Stay here.”

Mactier laughed, as if my decision were rather a good joke than the serious resolve of a man of sense. I own I was a little piqued, but I could not retaliate.

“Very well,” he said, “I won't trouble you for an explanation of

your new theory. You see, I am such a commonplace sort of fellow that I drive right at the natural appearance of things, and don't waste time hunting for needles in haystacks."

He turned to his men to give them some directions, while the two horses which Nick had saddled were led out to the yard. The captain had chosen one of his men to accompany him, while the others were despatched on various routes on foot, all to meet in Edinburgh.

I warned Nicol Ogg not to attempt to hide himself from me, assured him that no harm would come to him if he would deal openly with us, and I quitted the yard with Willie just as the captain and his man galloped off to the main road for the capital.

We walked slowly towards my house, and I was busy turning the whole case over in my mind. I don't think I ever was so near success, and found myself so completely baffled. But there was no use wasting time regretting what could not be helped. There was a task before me: to discover the meaning which lay under Hewitt's manœuvres. That there was a meaning everything tended to convince me.

To that task I devoted myself with as much calmness as I could command; and, to put a restraint upon my nervous eagerness, which was apt to mislead me, I was determined to set it all down in writing. That is my usual course when I find myself excited.

So, as soon as we had got into the house, I sent Willie to bed and then sat down to my note-book.

There are three items to be considered in the attempt to form an estimate of Hewitt's probable future course.

First—Mr. Cargill's order for two thousand pounds.

Second—The meaning of the note to Miss Burnett.

Third—The motive of his singular disappearance from the stable loft.

That brings the points of the case together. Now, as to the first item. By what means did he obtain two orders for such a large sum from the millionaire? Was it in the character of agent for Tavendale, and to be used for his defence; or was it obtained through Sarah's hands? The latter is the more likely, because Mr. Cargill, so far as it appears to me, is scarcely sufficiently interested in my unfortunate prisoner to make any effort to save him which might compromise himself—unless he has been made aware of his daughter's marriage.

But the manner in which Hewitt got the drafts is of little consequence at present; enough that, having got one of them, he is provided with the means of escape if he can only get it cashed. Upon that "if" hangs a great deal.

It is not at all improbable that, as Mactier suspected, he might go to Edinburgh, intending to cash it through some friend there. It

is more probable, however, having regard to the character of the man, that he will either endeavor to cash it himself at the bank here in Glasgow, or that he will endeavor to get Sarah to cash it for him. This course avoids the necessity of a third confederate; it is the boldest course, and is therefore least likely to be suspected and forestalled, and therefore is the course he is most likely to adopt.

Having the money, and knowing that it provided means of escape, what did his promise to pay it to Nicol Ogg signify? Plainly, nothing. He had no intention at all of paying his creditor, and he made the promise merely to obtain the hostler's services in carrying his note.

That brings me to the second point.

The note was of such a nature that it required no answer; yet he made the messenger believe that an answer was required, and would be given. He deceived the man in this, and he had a purpose in doing so. That purpose was to delay his return, and to lead him to the belief that his absence was caused by some unexpected alarm. Or he believed that Nick would betray him at once to the authorities, and gave him a missive which would not convey a scrap of information to them, while he three or four times repeated the statement that he was going to Edinburgh.

That leads me to my third point—the meaning of his singular disappearance.

Not intending to pay Nick his money, he had gone to him, frankly told him in what direction he was to take his flight, and sent him on an errand without any thought of waiting for his return. Nick having gone, Hewitt, calculating that he would betray him, secured the door inside, and made his escape immediately. Counting upon having been betrayed, he would credit my comrades with all the haste of judgment which was actually displayed, and that they would pursue him hot-foot in the direction he himself had indicated, while he quietly remained in safety behind them.

Sum-total: Hewitt has not left the city.

That being the case, now for my course. He will attempt to cash the order, and in person. I must set a watch upon the bank, and arrest him in the act.

Next, he will attempt to communicate with Sarah, in the hope of learning something of my movements, even if he be incapable, as I believe him to be, of making a further attempt to persuade her to join him in his flight. I must set a watch upon the house in Hill Street, and that gives me a second chance of laying hold of him. That is satisfactory.

No, it is not satisfactory. What am I to do about Sarah? I cannot use her as a bait to catch the villain without warning her. It is the last piece of weakness to which I must submit on her

account. I will go to her in the morning, and tell her to avoid him.

Poor girl, I owe her something for the many hours which she made happy for me. Ah! if I had only been a younger man.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SARAH BURNETT'S CONFIDANT.

I WILL not survive the fever that is throbbing in my veins. Respect, friendship, and love itself are all sacrificed. I cannot live after to be pointed at and scorned.

But they shall know the worst I am, and that worst is better than they would believe me to be until the truth is known from myself.

Dare I speak now, while he is still in danger?

No, I cannot. He has deceived me cruelly; his hand has stricken two lives—mine with the other. But I cannot be his executioner.

While he is still in danger I must be silent, let them think what they may of me. This book alone shall be my confidant; here all shall be told; and when the icy, welcome hand of death removes me, the truth will be known—my guilt and his guilt to the fullest.

The pale morning light is creeping into the room. The candle is flickering with a feeble, sickly light; there are little piles of filmy ashes strewn upon the hearth—ashes of my dead love.

These are the first things I see, the first things I *feel*, when I waken from the torpor in which I must have been sitting by the table here all night. The sickly candle burning in the socket reminds me of the hopes that have burned out this night; the gray dawn with its promise of sunshine reminds me that its light is for others, that there is only darkness for me. These ashes!—ay, it was well that in the strength of frenzy I burned his letters. This morning I would have been too weak to have destroyed these puny things that were as iron chains in binding me to him. These ashes are all that is left of many heart-links that were so precious to me, and now a breath scatters them.

I am glad it has been done; had these letters remained they would have weakened my hand, weakened my brain; they would have drawn me to him in spite of myself, and made me the wife of a—

See, I cannot write the word. But I will write it; I will think of it; it shall be the charm to guard me from him.

Yes, last night I would have consented to be the wife of an assassin.

How long ago is it? Eight hours! Eight years could not have made me so old and weary of all that is in life. Yet I seem to recollect nothing; I seem to feel nothing, but that there is a black, long waste lying between me and last night.

There were those few terrible moments when he stood with me confessing all, not by words but by looks, that told more than words ever could have done; he stood with me pleading, and I yielded. Then came a confusion of voices, a rush of footsteps, he fled from me, and there was darkness.

Then I saw Mr. Hadden bending over me, and I bade him go away; I came in here and locked the door. I understood nothing clearly after that. In my trance I must have taken out his letters, and drawn the light beside me. One by one I must have destroyed them. Looking back I see dimly, as if it had been another person, myself holding the letters to the flame, and watching them burn till not a scrap was left.

I pray that in burning them I have broken the last tie between us. The prayer must be sincere, for I feel no pain, no regret. Only a dull throbbing of my heart, a burning weight upon my brow, and a sense of weakness in my limbs. Can it be that death is already stretching peaceful arms towards me? I hope it may be so. Would that it might come before I have to meet Mr. Cargill and his daughter!

They will be here to-day, or they will send for me. How am I to meet his stern contempt, and her white face, with its innocent wonder and horror? I think that will be harder to bear than his wrath. She will not upbraid me, she will not scorn me; she will pity me, and her pity will be a heavier blow than all the contumely of the world.

I, who have caused her so much misery; I, who was about to wound her gentle nature to the quick—who did wound it so; I, who made her believe that she was the child of shame, and who was about to assume the honorable position she occupies—oh! I could bear her scorn a hundred thousand times rather than her pity once.

But I did not mean to thrust her from her home; I wished no more than to share her position with her, although he would have had me grasp and retain it all. But I can do something yet to make reparation. I can save her husband.

To that task I will devote myself. Come what will, he shall not suffer for the crime of which he is innocent. Rather than that, I will myself bear witness against Laurence Hewitt.

That must be the last resource, however. I must try to enable him to escape to some distant country, where he may be safe from pursuit, where he may lead a new life, and atone, if atonement be possible, for his crime.

Mr. Hadden has been here. At first I was not inclined to see him,

although he has been my best friend, ready in every difficulty to assist me with advice and money. Perhaps that is why I felt so averse to meeting him. I had deceived him with the rest, and when one feels one's self so worthless as I do now, the aversion to meet true friends is natural. I desired his respect, and I had forfeited every claim to it.

But Susan, who has been at the door repeatedly this morning, begging me, poor thing, to take some food or some tea, or to speak to her, insisted that I should go to him, as he had tidings of importance for me. She threatened to run away from the house if I did not come out of my room, as she could not bear any longer to feel herself alone in the place, with the dead body of my mother lying in the next room.

I did not heed the girl's threat, and I had not sensibility left in my heart to feel any gratitude for her simple sympathy. But I was moved by the probable nature of the subject to which Mr. Hadden's tidings might refer.

I rose and went to him. I expected to see him cold and angry with me, aware of the deception I had practised upon him. I was mistaken. The old kindly look was on his face, with a shadow of sadness that I knew was on my account.

Yet I doubted him, afraid that he had come to question me about—why does it cost me so much pain to write the name?—Laurence Hewitt.

At sight of me he started, made a quick step towards me, and then halted, his hands playing nervously with his hat and staff, and an expression of fright on his face.

I did not speak. He had not held out his hand to me; he had paused in advancing to me; he had shrunk from touching me.

Again I wronged him. After trying to speak, and failing, he came to my side and gently grasped my hand. It was a warm, kindly grasp, and yet so gentle that I felt it was the touch of a friend who would not desert me altogether in my shame.

There was a long, square mirror above the mantelpiece. He drew me to the hearth, and made me look in the mirror.

I understood then why he had started and seemed so much agitated.

My eyes were sunken, and were encircled by deep blue lines. My cheeks seemed to have grown hollow and my brow furrowed since last night. My lips were blue, and compressed with a spasmodic tightness; my hair, jet and glossy before, was now dry and matted, falling over my brow and temples, and was streaked with gray.

It was the haggard face of an old woman who had suffered years of anguish; and one night had wrought this change.

I did not marvel at his surprise—I did not marvel at his com-

passion and agitation. But they afforded me the first thrill of sensibility I had experienced since Laurence started from my side—a hunted criminal. The feeling was one of pain; not at the change in my appearance. God knows, whatever woman's vanity had been in my nature before, there was none left now.

The pain was at the recognition of his fidelity; that, seeing me as I was, knowing me to be what I am, he could still entertain a thought for me other than that of contemptuous pity.

After the long period of dull inanimation through which I had passed any feeling would have been a relief; and this was a relief as intense as that of one who suddenly recovers from paralysis.

Yet I had not power to express this feeling; not a feature moved to show that his sympathy had touched me. Coldly and steadily as an automaton I turned from the glass and fixed my gaze on him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

HE misinterpreted my expression. He thought I doubted the motive of his visit still, when all doubt had been dispelled.

He spoke with nervous haste.

"I do not come to question you," he said; "I come to warn you."

I tried to say "Thank you," but my tongue was parched and would not move. I bowed my head, and he went on:

"This is no time for explanations. I seek none, and do not mean to give any. I am here at this early hour to warn you."

He seemed to expect me to say something at this repetition of the purpose of his visit, and began again to handle his staff nervously.

I could only stare at him dumbly, although I saw that he was becoming excited and troubled by my silence.

"This house is watched, and will be watched for days to come," he proceeded, abruptly.

"Yes," I managed to say, slowly; but although all my strength was thrown into the effort my voice did not rise above a whisper.

"My warning is, then, that you should hold no communication, by post or messenger, with anybody who—who—" he stammered, in the difficulty he felt of giving his warning without recalling my disgrace; "that is, in fact, with anybody who may be desirous of avoiding acquaintances."

He stopped and looked at me, waiting for my reply.

"Thank you," I said, in the same cold whisper as before.

He seemed to be more than ever astonished by my coldness, and he had reason to be so, for he could not know the numbness which

overpowered me, and demanded so great an effort to overcome, even for the little I had said.

He began to move towards the door nervously.

"I know you are in pain, and I will not add to it by remaining with you any longer," he continued. "I have given you the warning. You know its importance; and I only ask you to remember by and by that they are the only words I have ever spoken which could be construed by my worst enemy into a betrayal of my duty. Remember that; try to think how much it has cost me to speak them for your sake, and blame me as little as you can for what will happen by and by."

"What *will* happen by and by!" How the words echoed and rang in my brain! I knew—I knew his meaning, and his grave tone of conviction smote me like an iron rod till my body shook.

He was at the door when I called to him,

"Mr. Hadden—"

My voice sounded so harsh and sharp that it startled myself as well as my friend.

He returned to me quickly, dropping his hat and staff on the table.

"Miss Burnett—Sarah," he cried excitedly, "this will kill you!"

He took my hand, attempting to lead me to a chair; but I did not move, and he desisted. He continued to hold my hand, and I was dimly conscious that his hand trembled on mine.

I stood there and spoke, but the voice and words were like those of another person to whom I was listening. I seemed to be gazing through a white mist into a chaos, and I had only the consciousness of one in a trance of what I said.

"You see that my manner is strange. I am aware of that, and yet have no power to control it. You think me ungrateful for the sacrifice you are making in my behalf. But I am not ungrateful; oh, sir, I am bitterly mindful of all I owe you for this, and many, many kindnesses I have never deserved from you."

"Hush, hush, Sarah!" he interrupted, nervously shaking my hand and trying to stop me; "don't speak of that, my poor lassie—I may call you by the old pet names still, may I not? There is nobody else to call you by them now."

I looked at him; vaguely I saw his features through the mist that hung over my eyes. I would have given my life if I could have felt myself worthy of that earnest look of regard he had fixed upon me.

"Can you call me by them still?"

"If you will let me."

"Do you know everything?"

"Everything—more than you know yourself yet, I hope."

I shaded my eyes and tried to clear the mist from them that I might see him better, while my words were pronounced firmly, so that I might remove any misapprehension of my guilt he might be laboring under.

"You cannot know more than I do now."

"No matter. I am sorry—but no matter. That cannot change me. You could not prevent it."

"I could have prevented it."

"I say you could not prevent it; and even if you could, I say again, no matter."

"You know that I have deceived you?"

"Yes."

"You know that I may have to answer for my share of what has happened in the position of a criminal?"

He was frightened at that; but presently his fright appeared to have reference rather to my mental state than to the prospect I had suggested.

"You have been excited and tried beyond your strength, Sarah," he said kindly; "you have had no rest, and I don't wonder that your overtaxed brain takes a morbid view of your position. The thing you have hinted at will never occur."

I wish it had been possible to show him my gratitude for the consolation he offered me. But a morbid fiend possessed me.

"I will owe my safety to the mercy of those I have wronged; but even then I cannot escape the shame that every honest tongue will cast at me."

That was my answer, and although I saw it pained him I could not check myself. He was patient with me.

"You must lie down and rest, Sarah, my lassie; and if it will give you any comfort to know it, be satisfied that, no matter what the worst may be that comes to you, my hand will be ready to help you to bear it. When everybody turns against you, that's just the time you will find me nearest you. Thunder! but if I was a younger man that's just the time I would marry you!"

"Marry me?"

I sickened at the thought of any man's life being tied to such a wretched wreck as mine.

I drew my hand from him and covered my face; not to hide tears or blushes—I had none—but to compress my brow, which was swelling and throbbing as if it would burst with the thought, the treacherous thought, which his self-sacrificing friendship had suggested to me.

But I was not so base as not to wince at the proposition I was about to make. There was still good enough left in my nature to enable me to respect truth and honor in whatever form they came, and I hesitated long before I spoke.

Perhaps I should not have spoken, but I desired the end so much that any sophistry sufficed to justify me to myself; and the sophistry I used now was the pitiful one that in the escape of Laurence time was afforded him for repentance, and no one could be harmed by granting that mercy.

"Am I to go now, Sarah?" he said, stretching his hand towards his hat, and apparently thinking his vehemence had offended me; "or do you wish me to stay? Have you anything to tell me? You won't mind the ridiculous observation I made just now. You know how long I have looked upon you as a child of my own."

"Do not speak that way, sir. It is I who should be on my knees at your feet begging your forgiveness, not you who should be addressing me as one deserving a single kindly thought."

"Now, now, don't say anything more about that. Just tell me if there is anything I can do for you, and let me go."

With an angry impulse to subdue every qualm of conscience I answered:

"There is something you can do for me."

"Well, what is it—why do you stop?"

"Because it is so difficult to tell you the service I would ask."

"That's unkind—to have any such feeling with me."

"You will not think so when you know what it is."

"I cannot think of anything that I would not do for your sake if it would only give you relief," he said earnestly.

"You can relieve me. Oh, if you would only do this service for me, you would not only make me your debtor for life—for that I am already—but you would bind every thought and action of my future to you! There is no drudgery, no task or shame that I would not submit to for your sake, if you will only consent to help me now."

He looked bewildered at first, and then he shook his head gravely.

"There is no service in my power that can earn such devotion. But anything I can do I will do for no other reward than the satisfaction of knowing that it helps you."

"I will tell you. I know that you are a detective."

"That I suspected. When did you discover my profession?"

"Four days ago. But a fortnight ago I knew that you were connected with the law, although in what capacity I did not then understand."

"And it was in consequence of knowing that, that you first laid before me Mr. Cargill's letters?"

I saw that his face was assuming a different aspect, almost a stern aspect, and his eyes were fixed upon me with a penetrating gaze. But I had determined to conceal nothing from him, and I replied steadily:

"It was."

"You were told to lay them before me?"

"Yes."

"That will do. I must not question you further, because I am so involved that all you say I must use for a purpose which will not please you. I did not mean to ask you so much as I have done, but you see my tongue slips, and the habit of prying into everything is too strong for me. Don't give me another chance of putting a question. Let me know what you want at once."

I clinched my hands, and in desperation found the words that were so hard to speak.

"You are in pursuit of Laurence Hewitt—desist from the pursuit. There is no man he fears except you—let him escape; and when he is beyond his present danger do with me what you will."

I expected him to be indignant at the proposition at first, and I had hoped by my prayers to win his consent. But he showed neither anger nor surprise. He patted me pityingly upon the shoulder, as if I had been a child, and had hurt myself.

"Poor lassie, poor lassie!" he said consolingly. "I knew you would be faithful under any circumstances, even to such a—well, we won't say what. I wish I could have helped you, but it is impossible."

I could not argue with him when he spoke in this way; I could only echo that last word, "impossible."

"Yes, impossible," he went on; "by my means an innocent man has been placed in peril of his life, by my means he must be rescued."

"But by rescuing him is it necessary that the other should take his place?"

"It is necessary."

"Even when I place in your hands proofs sufficient to remove every stain and suspicion from Tavendale?"

"Do not tempt me. I see only one course clear and straight before me. Duty and justice both compel me to follow it."

"Then I must stand alone to help him."

"For Heaven's sake," he cried, in agitation, "do not make your position worse than it is already, by attempting to help that wretch!—there, I should not have said that to you. But remember, every step you take is watched, and that any effort you make to assist him will be the means of delivering him into the hands of justice. Will you promise me to do nothing for him?"

"I cannot promise you that."

"You will forgive me for refusing to assist you in this."

"I asked you to do an act of injustice to others, an act of injustice to yourself. I see and know that your refusal has distressed you,

and it is I who crave your pardon for making the request. I know that you pity me, I know that you have some regard for me; and you will make allowances for the miserable conduct into which my own guilt and the feelings I once entertained for him forced me."

"Then you don't care for him now? You would not go with him if he was here begging you to go, and had a clear path before him?"

I looked at him, wondering that he could have imagined it possible for me to link myself to Laurence Hewitt after I had had time to realize the full extent of his crime. He understood me, and tried to prevent me speaking.

"Don't say a word," he cried; "you can't guess what a joy you have given me. You have lifted a load as heavy as Nelson's monument from my shoulders."

"But you must hear me—you must understand me. Although every feeling of respect and liking for him is crushed out from my heart, still the memory of what he was to me compels me to use what power I have left in trying to aid his escape."

"I see it is no use attempting to persuade you to what I believe to be the proper course. I know how positive you are, I see how faithful you can be, and I can only wish that such a good heart had been given to one who valued it."

"You are going, shall I see you again?"

"Not until this business is over, or until you have forsaken every thought of assisting him."

"You are angry with me."

"No, I am very sorry for you. Remember what I said to you: and one thing more—you will likely have a visit from Captain Mactier; be careful in speaking to him. Should any event of importance occur which places you in a difficulty, send for me. Good-bye, Sarah—be careful."

There was a tenderness in his manner as he pressed my hand which was different in some strange way from what it used to be, eccentrically affectionate as it had always been. He went away, and I felt that I had parted with my best friend—my only friend.

My conversation with Mr. Hadden has had a good effect upon me. The blood seems to be circulating more freely through my body; the feeling of congestion in the brain is less severe; I see more clearly, and feel readier for the task before me.

I do not understand why this interview produced such an effect, since the result has been to leave me without even the hope of one friend to help me in the course I have determined upon. Perhaps it is because his kindness has made me feel that there is one person in the world who, happen what may, will try to understand me, and in understanding me will blame my conduct less.

I have bathed my head with cold water, and taken some of the tea which Susan has been forcing upon me. They used to tell me that I was a woman of strong nerve, and I am conscious now that I must have been so before last night. I feel as if something of the old strength had returned to me, for the spirit of determination which Laurence used to praise so much is rising within me, and I set my face resolutely to meet the difficulties that lie in my path, and to do what I conceive to be my duty.

First, then, when he calls upon me for help I must be ready. He has no one else whom he can trust, and I cannot forsake him.

I must not move from the house, I must wait. While waiting I must prepare for that reparation which I have resolved upon making to Miss Cargill and her father—I dare not call him mine now. That is the highest and chief duty for which life is valuable to me still.

I will set down everything here, disguising nothing, hiding nothing, baring my heart and thought as truly as if I stood before the great judgment-seat.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TO KATHERINE CARGILL, OF MAVISBANK, FROM SARAH BURNETT.

THE proper beginning of my confession is with the day on which I first encountered Laurence Hewitt. He was a clerk in the office of the agents through whom my mother's allowance was paid.

One day, four years ago, my mother required me to go to the office to obtain an advance upon her allowance. She required it immediately to pay a creditor—a draper—who had become importunate, and refused to wait for payment longer than he had already done. The amount had been due to him for twelve months, and he threatened to poind and sell our furniture if the account were not settled on the following morning.

What a petty, what a contemptible beginning to such a dark tragedy! You, Katherine Cargill, the daughter of a millionaire, who have never known any need of money that could not be satisfied with a single word, how can I hope to make you feel the bitter shame, the cruel humiliation, under which a proud nature smarts when a tradesman has to become a dun?

Mine was a proud nature, and the trials which my mother's carelessness about money brought upon us—petty as they may appear to you—tortured me and hardened me.

They might have had a different effect if I had had a different training; but my mother was a vain woman, and, till within three

months of her death, she seemed to be indifferent to everything except dress. She did not care at what sacrifice or at what suffering to others this vanity was gratified, if it was gratified. The consequence of this was that as long as I can remember we were always in debt, and always in dread that every knock at the door was another creditor come to demand his due.

Keenly I suffered that dread when I came, at too early an age, to understand our position; my mother became so accustomed to be asked for money which she had not got to give that she was indifferent. I was too proud ever to become so, and the daily frets to which I was compelled to submit on this account made me hate the rich because they were rich.

I tried to reduce our expenses in every way that lay in my power; but, from the moment when I took charge of the house until now, I have never known what it was to feel secure from the insults of impatient creditors.

I mention all this in the hope that it may in some degree explain the deformity of my nature, and that it may help you to understand the high appreciation and value I placed on the service rendered me on the day when I went to the office of my mother's agents for the advance of her allowance.

Both the principals of the firm were from home; one would not return for three days, the other not for a week, and on the next day our creditor would fulfil his threat.

Mr. Hewitt was the managing clerk. He observed my distress, and, probably guessing the cause, he asked me to speak with him in his private room. There he begged me to speak freely and explain everything.

I did so, and he took upon himself the responsibility of making the required advance.

You can only understand my gratitude for this act of kindness if you understand the extent of the relief it gave me. I was capable of gratitude then, and the very hardness of my heart, which rendered it so difficult to reach, made my respect for him the stronger.

After that, instead of the junior clerk who had formerly called every quarter with my mother's allowance, Mr. Hewitt came himself. He was made welcome by me; he was welcomed also by my mother, for he had some pretensions to manner and appearance which pleased her. Besides, he endeavored to please her by paying her the innumerable little attentions which she was so eager to receive, and to which she had been for some time a stranger.

His visits soon became frequent, and, with those of another friend, Mr. John Hadden, formed the one pleasure of my dull, hopeless life.

Before we had known each other many months he asked me to be his wife. He told me frankly that he was penniless; that he had

worked his own way to what little position he had; and that, as in the past, so in the future, he had nothing save his own exertions to depend upon for success.

I accepted him, and was proud of him, because he had been so frank, and because, with opportunities to make his marriage a step towards his advancement, he preferred to trust to his own labor, and to take a wife without position or money.

I have said that nothing shall be disguised here; and although I shrink from saying it now, in view of what has since occurred, I will say it—I loved him with a passion that would have hesitated at no sin, no shame, for his sake. God knows how wretchedly I have proved the depth of that passion.

I told him everything then within my knowledge of my mother's affairs and of my own prospects. They were poor enough; but he was generous, and told me that he valued my strong affection and resolute spirit more than all the wealth in the city. They were things, he said, to help a man in the world if he was only willing to work. Surely such words as these gave me reason to be proud of him.

He explained to me that he was anxious to start in business on his own account; that, from the favor shown to him by a number of gentlemen, he believed he could form an extensive and profitable connection if he had only the means to take an office and to support himself for six or nine months. We discussed the matter again and again without seeing any immediate prospect of realizing our wishes in this respect.

I had no money, and it was impossible to touch my mother's allowance, because that was already mortgaged for the necessities of the house. His salary was so small that it had been barely sufficient to enable him to maintain the appearance necessary to his position. So he had been unable to save anything, and he did not know any one from whom he could venture to ask the loan of the sum he required, namely, one hundred and fifty pounds.

I have mentioned another friend who was frequently at our house, Mr. Hadden. He was an old gentleman without any relations. His habits were eccentric, but his heart was and is a good, kind one. He had taken a strong liking to me, and with the watchfulness of a tender father noted my every whim, and endeavored to check it when the whim was a wrong one, and to gratify it whenever it seemed right.

I need not delay here in trying to explain the many little ways in which Mr. Hadden displayed his affection for me. The advice and assistance which I could not obtain from my mother I learned to seek from him. I learned to trust him, and until after I had promised to become the wife of Laurence Hewitt I do not think that I had hidden a thought or action of my life from him.

I do not know yet why I fancied that the revelation of my betrothal would pain him, and shrank from confessing it to him. But at last I did confess it to him; and although at first he seemed startled and troubled by the confession, he presently showed himself eager to serve me and my future husband.

He advanced the money required, and Mr. Hewitt started in business on his own account. The calculations Laurence made were speedily confirmed; and he soon began to obtain a valuable practice. But, until his position became assured, and his debt to Mr. Hadden was paid, by his desire our marriage was from time to time postponed.

I never doubted his reasons for this postponement; I never doubted that it was in consideration of my comfort that he wished to make his position sure before we married. There were few people for whom I cared; my life had been an isolated one; and when I did love, I gave my whole heart and faith. That was why I submitted blindly to his arguments, never thinking what evil results this delay might produce. So convinced was I that this delay was necessary, that latterly, when he urged me to throw prudence to the wind and become his wife, I refused.

Meanwhile, he maintained a position of high respectability, and obtained a place in the best society in the city. That was my chief reason for now desiring delay on my part; for I saw, or imagined I saw, that our marriage would interfere with his advancement.

You will say that this was a cold, a callous, and a worldly view to take of such a tie. No doubt it was; and no doubt my own nature was to blame for it in the first instance; but something of the error is attributable to his teachings. Remember how I loved him, and you will understand how my whole mind became absorbed in him. Day after day I listened to his bitter philosophy, which made money the idol of the world, and goodness nothing. Day after day he would point out to me how men and women, ignorant and educated, bowed down before wealth; how they grovelled and humiliated themselves to obtain it; how they courted and fawned upon those who possessed it; how the rich man was a king among his fellows, while the good man was thrust aside and uncared for.

My own experience had been of such a kind as to make me a ready pupil to such teachings. My knowledge of life had been obtained among its pettiest cares, with little friendship or kindness to lighten it, and give my mind breadth. My thought and sight seemed to contract, and I saw the world through one light. I learned to surpass my teacher in cynicism and contempt for the creatures about me.

I craved for wealth and for position, not for any good that they might enable me to do, but for the power they would give to spurn those who now seemed to spurn me because of my poverty.

It was in this diseased state of mind that I made the discovery of the letters written by Mr. Cargill, which led me to the belief that I was his legitimate daughter, while you were enjoying all the advantages of the position which was really mine.

I made the discovery exactly in the manner related to Mr. Hadden; and my first feeling on making it was one of delirious joy. The wealth, the power, for which I yearned was within my grasp. I desired the position which the letters indicated as mine too much to hesitate for an instant in giving them entire credence. They seemed to offer me all that I had most desired; huge riches for myself and Laurence, riches that would make us envied and adulated by the cringing world.

No more anxious days and nights about the miserable expenses of our housekeeping; no more pinching and scraping to maintain an appearance of respectability; no more desires to be stifled and pleasures to be denied.

I did not think of the misery which my discovery would bring upon you, or the shame it would entail upon my father. I thought only of myself and Laurence.

With the suspicious greed of a miser who fears to display his wealth lest it should be stolen from him, I concealed my discovery from my mother until I had seen Mr. Hewitt.

I took the letters and I went with them to his office. His delight was not less than mine, but it was calmer and more calculating. After he had read them carefully through, and made numerous notes of the principal letters and of the results of his perusal of them, he folded them up carefully again, and handed them back to me.

He was pale and excited, although he preserved the utmost calmness of manner. I observed then, as I had repeatedly observed before, that when he was most excited his manner was most calm and deliberate.

"Treasure these," he said; "they are your title-deeds to a million."

He spoke to me with the quiet politeness and reserve with which he might have addressed an ordinary client. I was surprised and a little dismayed, for, selfish as I was, I had no thought for myself in which he did not fully share. I had gone to him expecting to be clasped in his arms, in the great joy of knowing that all our difficulties were removed, that the future was clear before us, and that in marrying me he gained everything that I most desired for him.

And now, when he saw it all he stood coldly there, without even extending his hand to say that he was glad our course was clear.

"Is that all you have to say?" I asked. "Do you not see, can you not feel, can you not share my delight in this?"

His face seemed to brighten, but he compressed his lips as if he were restraining some impulse.

"I do share your delight; I congratulate you most sincerely."

"Congratulate me most sincerely, Laurence?" I cried. "Why are you so cold? Do you not see that this good-fortune makes me glad for your sake more than my own?"

"Is that true?" he said eagerly, holding his breath and bending towards me to scan my face the more closely.

Something chilled me; it seemed as if my good-fortune were to cost me his love, and for the moment I felt ready to cast my title-deeds, as he called them, into the fire. It was so strange, it was so cruel, that he should doubt my fidelity to him, as I saw he was doing by the keen, inquiring gaze he fixed upon me. That was the first time I had ever questioned the power of wealth.

I bent my head, and laid the letters down upon the table.

"Have I done anything to offend you?" I asked.

He saw that I was pained; he advanced to me and took my hand.

"Offend me?—you could not do that even if you tried. There is nothing in your power to do that can make me forget how much I owe you—not even if you came to me now to tell me that our engagement is at an end."

I looked up to him quickly and angrily.

"Do you suspect that?"

"I suspect nothing," he replied quietly; "but when you engaged yourself to me I was a struggling man, and you my equal, because you had little more than myself. My position remains the same; yours is altogether changed, and—"

"And you doubted me. You thought that this change in my fortune would change my affection too. I have not deserved that suspicion from you."

"You mistake me, Sarah," he said, in a low tone, but still maintaining an air of provoking distance. "I know your headstrong nature and its generous impulses. You do not see the full importance of this discovery as I see it. You do not see that in becoming recognized as the daughter of Mr. Cargill you must consult his wishes in choosing a husband."

"He has never done anything to deserve the right to be consulted in such a matter. He has done everything to permit me to demand and to insist that my wishes alone shall be considered in this. And whether he had the right or not I would not alter, even if my decision were to bar me from my just claims."

"You think so now; but when you have had time to reflect, and to realize the change fully, you will see that you owe yourself some consideration."

I was annoyed with him, and I spoke petulantly.

"Then you wish our engagement to be broken off?"

"Sarah!"

The tone and look rebuked me.

"If it is not that you mean, then what is it?"

"I mean nothing more than this, that I would think it a natural desire for you to wish our engagement cancelled now. On my part, what seemed like doubt of you is a proof of how dearly I prize you. For although to lose you would be the wreck of every hope and chance for me in life, I wish to offer you the opportunity of releasing yourself."

"And I refuse to be released," I cried passionately.

He clasped me to his breast then, and I was assured that he loved me. More, I was assured that there was something else than money worth living for.

"My own darling," he said, "if you could only guess the agony I was suffering just now when I seemed to you so cold and callous; if you could only guess the relief and gladness you have given me, you would know how much dearer you are to me than anything the world can offer."

"The world offers you riches," I said joyfully, "and you will not refuse them because they are offered through me?"

"I will accept them because they are offered through you. And now sit down, and we will consider how we shall proceed in the business. It is one thing to have the title to a fortune, it is quite another thing to obtain the acknowledgment of that title."

He called to the boy in the outer room to tell any one who called that he was particularly engaged, and could not be seen for an hour, at least. Then he locked the door, and seated himself by his table. He had placed a chair for me close to his own.

He took up the sheet of paper upon which he had written his notes of the letters.

"Now," he began, "I am going to say something which will perhaps dishearten you; but take courage, we have everything in our favor. These letters clearly prove to my mind that you are the legitimate daughter of Robert Cargill of Mavisbank. But the case will no doubt go into court, and there the proof will be insufficient."

"How?—do you not say it is clear?"

"To you and to me, yes, but not in the eyes of the law. To satisfy the law we must be able to prove that the change of children took place as described in these letters; and, next, we must have conclusive proof that you are the child of Mrs. Cargill, who was changed for the child of Mrs. Burnett. That will be rather a difficult matter after the lapse of so many years."

"But Mrs. Burnett will not refuse to give evidence when she learns that the truth is known."

"Now, Sarah, you must look at this matter with the cold and calculating eye of a stranger. What did Mrs. Burnett consent to part with her own child for at its birth?"

"To secure her the fortune and position which are mine by right."

"Exactly so. Yet Mrs. Burnett is not a very wicked or bad-hearted woman. She has never been very unkind to you; she has never done anything to lead you to suspect her relationship to you."

"Never."

"And you can see from these letters that it cost her some grief to consent to the arrangement which separated her from her own child, notwithstanding the great advantage her child was to obtain."

"Yes, I observed that; but she did consent at last."

"Exactly so. And having consented, having overcome the first yearnings of a mother, she took you to her arms, and resolutely set herself to the task of concealing the fraud which had been practised upon you. Now, having succeeded in concealing it all these years, do you think it is probable or even possible that she will turn round and acknowledge the truth willingly when she knows that it will ruin her daughter's prospects?—prospects to which she has become accustomed—deprive her of fortune, of her grand home, and disgrace her in the eyes of the many who respect and pay her homage now. Do you think a mother who has sacrificed so much, and who has been faithful to her sacrifice so long, will do that?"

"But she must do it—she cannot help herself; we have the proofs."

"Wrong again, Sarah. We have not the proofs; we have only a part of them. A considerable part, certainly, but utterly useless unless we can obtain the rest. You see, I am separating your interests and my own entirely from this case, and reviewing it in all its bearings just as I would that of an ordinary client."

"But you seem almost as if you doubted the truth yourself," I said, for his arguments made me uneasy.

"No, no, I do not doubt at all myself; but as a lawyer I doubt everything, and you will see the importance of doing so presently."

He seemed so clear-sighted and wise that, while he seemed to be undermining my great hopes, I felt prouder of him than ever. I rested my hand on his arm, and looked at him trustfully.

He appreciated this mark of confidence, for he smiled as he proceeded in the same calm, searching tone as before.

"There is another phase of the question to be considered. Admitting the highly improbable event of Mrs. Burnett confessing the truth, even that would not be enough to establish your claim. You see by these letters that Mr. Cargill has quarrelled with her, and for years apparently has held no direct communication with her. Now, remember his high position, the respect and influence he possesses,

and, above all, the power his wealth gives him. Remember, too, that the daughter whom he has placed in the position of his heiress, and for whom, no doubt, he entertains some affection, has never been suspected to be other than she appears. Well, suppose I, a young and struggling lawyer, suddenly produce you as his legitimate heiress, and advance these letters and Mrs. Burnett in proof of the claim, what do you think would be the result?"

"I do not know."

"Why, that you and I would be denounced as impostors, and most likely would be consigned to prison for a year or two to repent our folly and the insult we offered to a man of his position."

He paused, as if to observe the effect of his words. I was dismayed enough, but, although the whole prospect seemed to darken before me, and I could see no way through it, I did not lose heart. I felt a stern resolve rising within me, and the greater the obstacles to be encountered, the greater became my determination to overcome them.

"Then, is the discovery of no value? is it impossible to prove the truth?"

"No, not impossible; only difficult. You will see by the letter dated October that the nurse, Jean Gorbai, is in possession of certain letters which Mr. Cargill endeavored to obtain from her. She refused to part with them, and I believe that these letters and her evidence would establish your claim in spite of the denial of Mrs. Burnett and Mr. Cargill. But, indeed, I do not think they would attempt to deny it if we had that proof on our side."

"Then I will see Jean Gorbai at once," I exclaimed, partly rising from my seat.

But he gently restrained me.

"You must be calm, Sarah, if we are to succeed. You know this woman?"

"Yes."

"Where does she live?"

"At Port-Dundas."

"What sort of a woman is she?"

"Somewhat vulgar and inclined to drink."

"Is she friendly to you?"

"I think so. Until two years ago, I have not seen her since I was a child. But since she came to live at Port-Dundas I have met her several times, and she has always been most kind to me."

"Has she ever given any hint that you could associate with this discovery?"

"I do not recollect—and yet—yes, I remember now that twice after she had been drinking she has said that if she and Mrs. Burnett liked I might be in a very different position from my present one. I understand what she meant now."

"Yes, it is quite clear," he said slowly, and resting his brow on his hand.

"I will go to her—I am sure she will help me."

"Don't stir, you cannot be sure of any one when their interests are concerned. It is a delicate and a dangerous matter we have in hand; the result is a fortune, or maybe hopeless disgrace to both of us, and to all who aid us. This woman, Jean Gorbai, is no doubt well paid for her silence, and she will not readily consent to risk the loss of her present comforts to serve you or anybody, no matter what inducements we offer."

"You are too suspicious, Laurence."

"No, I am only careful for your sake and for my own. Before I move a step in this affair you must pledge yourself to be guided entirely by my counsels in every word you speak—ay, in every thought you think, if that be possible."

"Who else is there whose counsels I would follow?"

"Mr. Hadden's, for instance, or your own impulses. Do you pledge yourself?"

"I do."

"That you will speak or be silent as I direct?"

"In everything I promise to obey you, Laurence."

He pressed my hand warmly, and smiled in admiration of my submission.

"I accept this," he said softly, "as another proof of your love. Now, I will show you how I mean to proceed."

CHAPTER XL.

THE CHART LAID DOWN.

THIS interview is impressed upon my memory with the indelible lines which anguish makes. It was the first step to the dark end which has been reached, and every word, every look, recurs to me now with the vividness of lightning in a black midnight. I surrendered myself utterly to his control; I kept my pledge and obeyed him, even when I felt that we were doing wrong.

I wish you, Miss Cargill, to know all this in detail, because I know that you, who love Mr. Tavendale, will understand me and apportion my share of the guilt justly.

I waited patiently until Mr. Hewitt had hurriedly glanced over his notes of the case again. Then he said gravely:

"Our course is at present a simple one. You must permit me to see Mrs. Burnett alone, in the first instance, as I may be better able to get the truth from her by surprise when you are absent than if

you were with us. At the same time, I confess that I have little hope of obtaining the truth from her either way, and you must prepare yourself for her most vehement denial of it."

"I am prepared for that; it is natural for her to wish to conceal the fraud more than ever now when its revelation would cause her child so much trouble."

"Exactly so; and in the next place I must see Jean Gorbai. I anticipate less difficulty with her, because she may be bribed. The only question is how to present the matter to her so as to satisfy her that she will gain more by speaking out than by holding her tongue."

"She will consent, for she is not restrained by the same powerful motive which holds Mrs. Burnett in check."

"We will see; it is not easy to say how such a woman may act. We must guard every step we take, for we have a millionaire for an opponent."

"But we have truth on our side."

"A very valuable assistant, no doubt, but not always a successful one. However, if we can only get possession of the letters Jean Gorbai appears to hold, we can safely give Mr. Cargill the option of acknowledging your claim quietly and with little scandal, or of testing it in court."

"When do you begin?"

"Just now. I will go with you to Hill Street and see Mrs. Burnett."

He rose quickly, folded up the paper he had in his hand, and placed it in his pocket-book.

Then he accompanied me to her house.

Mrs. Burnett was in the parlor, busy with the arrangement of a new dress. Susan told me this; and Mr. Hewitt bade me wait in my own room until he called for me.

He entered the parlor, and closed the door.

I passed into my bedroom, and took off my bonnet and cloak. I sat down, waiting with a cold, nervous feeling the result of the interview which was now going on.

For some time I heard nothing but the low murmur of voices. Suddenly my mother gave a sharp cry, as if she had been struck or wounded in some way; then I started to my feet. I heard her speaking rapidly and loudly, but at first I could not distinguish any of the words. At last I heard her cry:

"You are a wretch, and a false, wicked wretch, and it is a parcel of lies you come to me with! I tell you it is all false—every word of it! Leave the house, and never let me see your face again!"

Mr. Hewitt said something in a low voice, and then he came out of the room. I met him on the threshold of my chamber. He

seemed paler than usual, and he was frowning slightly, although he spoke calmly.

"It is just as I expected," he said; "she denies everything. Do you think you have nerve enough to face her, and to stand firm against her persuasions and her anger?"

I answered him by walking straight into the parlor, and he followed close behind me.

My mother was sitting upright on the sofa. Her eyes were unnaturally bright, and protruding. Her whole face was crimson with passion, and her lips moved nervously.

A day before, had I seen her in this state, I would have been alarmed for her health, because the doctor had more than once warned me that any sudden or violent emotion would very likely result in a fit of apoplexy. But my heart was too much imbittered against her at this moment for me to think of that. As she sat there, I saw only the woman who had cheated me of a daughter's duty and affection, while she had robbed me not only of fortune, but of a mother's love and a father's care.

I felt hard and cruel; I felt almost as if it would have given me no sorrow to have seen her fall dead at my feet.

I held up the bundle of letters before her, and the sternness of my aspect seemed to frighten her, for her lips trembled more than before.

"Were these letters written to you by my father, Robert Cargill?" I said.

"Sarah!" she screamed, starting to her feet, "you don't, you can't, believe what that villain has put into your head? You can't—you can't believe that I, who have watched over you with all the tenderness of my heart, am not your mother?"

"I do believe it—I know it. You have kept up this cheat upon me from my birth; you cannot deceive me now. Every word you utter, every angry look you give me, only confirms the truth that you are trying to keep up the cheat still in order to save your own daughter."

She stretched out her arms wildly towards me. Her mouth opened as if she were trying to speak; her face suddenly changed from a crimson to a livid hue; she tottered a step forward, and sank to the floor without a cry or moan.

I was alarmed at this, but Mr. Hewitt whispered that it was another proof in our favor, since it showed how strongly the discovery of the truth had affected her.

He lifted her on to the sofa, and, after making some efforts to restore her to consciousness, he bade me send Susan for the doctor, while he carried my mother into her bedroom.

Dr. Mitchell resides quite close to our house, and, fortunately, be-

ing at home when the girl went for him, he was with us in a few minutes. He immediately applied himself to the restoration of my mother, and by the gravity of his looks I divined that her condition was more dangerous than I had suspected.

Mr. Hewitt beckoned me to follow him to the lobby. There he rested his hand upon my shoulder and gazed steadily in my eyes.

"You must have courage," he whispered, "and you must be firm. You must steel your heart to resist her tears and supplications as well as her anger. As soon as she recovers she will assail you with all the arts which have enabled her so long to sustain the fraud."

"She cannot move me," I said resolutely.

After a moment's pause, he nodded his head as if satisfied.

"I can trust you," he said, "but I do not think there is another woman in the world whom I could have trusted under the circumstances. I am going to Jean Gorbal now; you come to me at the office to-morrow at twelve, and I will let you know the result."

He went away, and I returned to the bedroom, where the doctor was still engaged with my mother. He explained to me that she was laboring under a fit of apoplexy, caused by some unusual excitement; and he warned me to keep her as quiet as possible, and above all things to keep the cause of excitement away from her.

All that afternoon and the two following days my mother lay in a state of half-consciousness. I sat with her during the night, and towards morning she began to mutter incoherently. It was difficult to make much meaning out of her broken words and disjointed sentences. But by listening intently I at length succeeded in discovering her meaning.

The effect of her mutterings was a complaint of my cruelty and of Laurence Hewitt's knavery; and an assertion that Mr. Cargill's scheme had not been successful, and, in fact, had not been carried out at all.

The strain upon my own nervous system had been greater than I imagined, seeing that I kept so cool and felt so clear in all my faculties. But in the stillness of the night, with the strange utterances of my mother, who lay between life and death, beating upon my ears, the strain began to tell. Her words obtained a larger meaning in my mind, in consequence of her condition, and that mysterious solemnity which always pervades a sick chamber in the depth of night. They made a much deeper impression upon me than I could have thought anything she said would have done.

I began to question the course I had adopted, and began to doubt that the fraud which seemed to have wronged me so much had ever been perpetrated.

CHAPTER XLI.

DOUBTS.

I CALLED upon Mr. Hewitt next day, as arranged. I explained my doubts to him, and he looked at first astonished and then serious.

"You have surely forgotten all that I said to you yesterday," he said.

"I have forgotten nothing."

"Then you are too sensitive, and you are not so strong as I gave you credit for being. Why, what is more natural than that in her state of half-consciousness Mrs. Burnett should give utterance to the thought that was strongest and uppermost in her mind? That thought being, of course, for the safety of her child."

"That seems natural," I said; "and still I doubt."

He seemed to be annoyed, and looked at his watch to hide it.

"Well, you have just five minutes to make up your mind. We must decide within that time whether we are to stop where we are, or to go on, no matter what turns up."

"You are still convinced that we are right?"

"More convinced than ever. I have seen Jean Gorbai, and although she will not give up the letters, she has shown them to me. They prove beyond doubt that the trick was successfully played, and that Mr. Cargill knows it."

"Will she show me the letters?"

"No. She permitted me to see them only on condition that I should not trouble her about them again until they were required to be produced in a court of law. I promised her that neither you nor I would attempt to interfere with her treasure until their production became necessary."

"Then she is willing to help us?"

"Quite willing, only she is cunning and cautious, and will not commit herself until she sees that success is probable. Now, are we to go on or stop?"

"I will not hesitate again."

"Then you must remember your promise to follow my directions in every particular, no matter how strange they may appear sometimes."

"You will not find me falter again."

"Very good. I hear our friend in the office. You will obtain some satisfaction from her."

He opened the door, and Jean Gorbal entered. I was astonished and sorry to see that, early as it was in the day, she had been drinking. Her step was not quite steady, and her manner was of that excessively familiar and gay character which drink induces in some natures, and which is so repulsive when exhibited by a woman.

She smirked and grimaced as she came into the room, and slapped Mr. Hewitt on the shoulder, calling him a "jolly lad," as if she had known him for years. When she observed me, she saluted me with such an exuberance of friendliness, and so many significant winks and nods, referring to my relationship to Mr. Hewitt, that I felt somewhat disturbed. He placed a chair for her, and in doing so contrived to whisper to me to say as little as possible.

While he accepted her familiarities with extraordinary good-humor, and joked with her about her robustness and her widowhood, I was amazed to see him take from the cupboard a bottle of brandy and glasses, which he set upon the table. Seeing that she had already had more than enough to drink, it seemed to me shameful to give her more; but, knowing that his object was to keep her in as good-humor as possible, I did not attempt to interfere with him.

He poured out a large glassful and gave it to Mrs. Gorbal. He poured out a glassful for himself at the same time, but I observed that he took very little of it, while he did not permit hers to stand a moment empty.

For some time he continued to sustain a conversation, which consisted of the merest commonplaces about herself and her affairs. When, however, she had emptied her glass a third time, and expressed her high approval of the liquor, he touched upon the business. His manner of doing this showed me that he had been gradually gliding up to the subject, although I had thought his observations quite apart from it. So there was no abruptness apparent to her when he said:

"You remember everything we were talking about last night?"

"That do I, man, every word o't, and ye'll find that I can stick to a bargain like a burr, as ither folk hae fan' before ye."

She winked and nodded to me significantly, as if there had been some important secret between us.

"Then you consent to what I proposed," he said, "and you will help this lady to obtain her rights?"

"Ay do I consent. I'll help the lassie—that will I; for did I no nurse her when she was a wean? and, though we hae been parted this wheen years, I aye minded her, and, fact as death, I thought more aboot her since my callant ran awa' frae me than I hae done about him, the ungratefu' brat."

"I knew you were a sensible woman, Mrs. Gorbai, and I am sure you will find that Miss Sarah likes you just as much as you can like her."

"Oh, we're weel enouch acquaint—we're weel acquaint. Are we no, Sarah?"

And she winked and nodded to me again, with a species of drunken cunning which made me feel sick and disgusted. I did not know why. I had liked the woman well because of the good-nature she had always displayed towards me, and I had pitied her infirmity. But I had never seen her in this state before, and there was something in the peculiar expression with which she regarded me now that perplexed and troubled me.

"I know that you have always been kind to me, Mrs. Gorbai," I said awkwardly, "and I am sure I am grateful. I do not know how I shall be able to repay you for the service you are about to render me now. But anything that I may have the power of doing I will do for you. As Mr. Hewitt has the entire charge of my affairs, he will arrange everything with you, and you can trust him as you would myself."

"I ken that, I ken that; and ye may lippen yersel to him safely. He's a smart lad, and he'll make a braw guidman, I doot na. Ay, an' he's a clever lad tae; and if we a' pu' thegither fair and steadily we'll win the port we're making for, nae fear."

I looked at Mr. Hewitt, as much for an explanation of her strange look as of her strange words.

By a slight motion of his hand he signalled me to be silent; and another time I was surprised by the course of this singular scene.

"We can settle all that between ourselves, Mrs. Gorbai," he said hastily; "in the meanwhile Miss Sarah will be obliged to leave us to our chat, as Mrs. Burnett is dangerously ill."

As he spoke he advanced to me and led me towards the door.

Mrs. Gorbai sat smirking and nodding drunkenly, as if everything was perfectly understood between us.

I saw that he wished me to go, and in this, too, obeyed him, although I felt somewhat perplexed and bewildered by his conduct. As I was passing out at the door he whispered that he would call at Hill Street in two hours.

I had promised him that I would not falter or hesitate again, no matter how strange his conduct might appear, and I walked home with more doubt in my mind than I had felt when he reprimanded me for my hesitation. But before I reached home I had satisfied myself that my doubts were the greatest ingratitude to him. He had explained to me all the difficulties that we would have to encounter: he had left it to me to decide whether we should stand still or advance, and I said—Advance.

Acting upon that command, he was working on my behoof with all the skill and knowledge his experience gave him; he was risking his reputation and all his future prospects for my sake in the contest he had undertaken to wage with a man of such wealth and high position as Mr. Cargill, and it seemed to me, now that I reflected upon it, the cruellest ingratitude to doubt the necessity and propriety of anything he did. Besides, he had told me that the odds were so much against us that he must use means which, under other circumstances, he would gladly have avoided.

When he came to me, in two hours' time, he found me firm and unswerving in our purpose.

The result of his second interview with Jean Gorbal resulted only in a clearer understanding of the agreement they had come to at their first meeting.

From this, and from what she had said to me herself, I now felt confident of her help, and therefore more assured of the final result.

Mr Hewitt was particular in his inquiries about my mother's health and about the doctor's opinion of it. Having told him everything, he confessed frankly that he could not feel sorry for her present condition, as it was more than probable that Mr. Cargill, the moment he became aware of our efforts, would endeavor to see her, and would use all his influence over her to strengthen her in the denial of the truth.

"When are you to acquaint him of my claim?"

"You must acquaint him, and you must do it at once."

I shrank from this; but he showed me good reasons for it.

"Remember your promise," he said, warningly, "and be bold. Why, if you have not courage to make known your claim, how can you expect others to acknowledge it?"

"I am ready," was my reply.

"That is right. You will go to Mavisbank, see your father, and tell him how you have discovered everything just as you told it to me. That will give him an opportunity of disposing of the matter quietly, and at any rate it will be a point in your favor that you endeavored to obtain your legitimate position without clamor."

"I understand, and I will do everything as you direct."

"There is a slight chance that when he sees you some degree of natural affection, combined with his dread of the exposure which would take place if the matter went into court, whatever way it might be decided, may lead him to save us the necessity of any further trouble."

"He is a very proud man, I have heard, but he is said also to be a just man."

"He will be put to the test now, and I shall be very much astonished if he does not try by some trick to outwit you. Should you

fail to see him, ask for the lady who occupies your place; explain everything to her, and, as I believe she is a good sort of a creature, she may be disposed, for her own sake as well as for yours, to prevent your adopting any violent measures."

"Is that possible?"

"It is just possible. But be particular about this, that in any case Mr. Cargill must not be permitted to have speech with Mrs. Burnett until the whole matter is decided."

CHAPTER XLII.

SARAH CLOSES HER BOOK.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Hewitt's counsel appeared to me the wisest and best under the circumstances, as I have already told you, I could not help once or twice feeling an involuntary hesitation in obeying it; and although, in bidding me go to Mavisbank and state my claim, his direction agreed with my own sentiments, several days elapsed before I fulfilled his command.

It was not that I feared the issue or feared Mr. Cargill; indeed, I could be boldest always where I had to oppose myself to wealth—I envied or hated the possessors so much. I cannot explain why I shrank from this first and most important step towards the object I was resolved to attain. It might have been that I felt some twinges of regret on your account, Miss Cargill, but the feeling was so vague that you must not weigh it in the balance in my favor.

At length I did go to Mavisbank. It was on the day on which Mrs. Burnett showed the first decided symptoms of recovery. You can remember the occasion of my visit; the surprise and pain of the discovery I made known to you must have been too great for you ever to forget.

Of our interview I need say nothing more than that your beauty, your gentle manner, and your generous nature made me resolve that, come what might, you should share my good-fortune equally.

When I told Mr. Hewitt that same night of the deep impression you had made upon me, and your apparent readiness to acknowledge me as a sister, he seemed to suspect your motive.

"Her conduct is strange," he said, "certainly; but she has so much at stake that we must wait till we see what it means. We shall know that by the time her father returns. Till then we must watch and wait."

He now cautioned me not to allow you or my father to see Mrs. Burnett, and in his cold, cynical way counselled me against yielding my rights to your apparent gentleness.

He inquired whether or not my mother had spoken of the business since she recovered from her delirium.

"No," I replied. "She seemed to awaken from a long and painful sleep. She saw me by her bedside, and she regarded me with an anxious, half-frightened stare. Then she uttered a low moan, and since she has not spoken a word to me."

"Has she not asked about me?"

"Yes. She asked Susan this morning, when she thought I was out of the room, but I had warned the girl not to speak of you; and as I advanced to the bed my mother shrank back, making a feeble motion with her hands to Susan not to answer."

"Umph! When she does speak about me you must expect to hear her say unpleasant things."

Two days after that my mother was able to be lifted from her bed into the parlor. She seemed to be suffering greatly, not in her body, but in her mind. She spoke to me as little as possible. When I helped her to her food, or assisted her from one room to the other, she seemed to accept my aid with a degree of fright.

I know that I was cold and stern in my manner towards her; but as I never had failed in my duty yet, and as I did not fail in it even now, so far as watchful care and readiness to do anything for her comprised my duty, her conduct chagrined me a little for the first day or so.

That feeling, however, soon disappeared. For, as she was aware of the determination of my character, and also knew the purpose upon which I was bent, it was natural that she should fear me and shrink from me.

I warned Susan not to let her know when Mr. Hewitt called, lest it should disturb her and perhaps produce another fit, which the doctor had told me would probably prove fatal. I suspect that Susan did not obey me in this, for on the third day after my visit to you he called.

He told me that Jean Gorbai had consented to accompany me to Mavisbank as soon as Mr. Cargill returned, and to declare to him her intention of supporting my claim with all the testimony in her power.

This was pleasant news, and it seemed to promise a speedy settlement of the whole troublesome affair.

I returned to the parlor, where I had left my mother, and found Susan with her, bending over her as if whispering. The girl looked confused, and hastily left the room. My mother's face was flushed and her lips twitched slightly, as on the day when she had the fit, and I feared another attack.

It passed away, however, without any visible effect, and I did not refer to the circumstance either to her or to Susan.

The next day, having gone out, I returned sooner than I had intended; and on entering the parlor I was astonished to observe a small table drawn close to the sofa on which my mother lay, and she was sitting up with writing materials before her, evidently trying to write a letter.

At sight of me she started, snatched up the paper, and, crumpling it in her hand, thrust it into the bosom of her dress.

I made no observation about this, but turned and left the room. I knew that she was writing to Mr. Cargill, and I knew that Susan was to post it. It was quite as important that there should be no correspondence between them, in the meantime, as that they should not be permitted to have an interview.

I went into the kitchen and found Susan there. The girl saw there was something wrong by my manner, and she began nervously to rattle the dishes she was washing.

I asked her nothing; I merely told her that if she posted any letters for my mother she would do me a great injury, while she would not do Mrs. Burnett any real service. As I had always been considerate towards the girl, she immediately confessed that she had promised to post a letter without letting me know, and declared that if it was to do me any harm she would rather have burned her hand off than have even thought of doing it.

I was satisfied of her sincerity, and said nothing more than that she might have ruined my future prospects, and might do so still by yielding to my mother's request.

I showed her that I trusted her by going out again. This time I went to Mr. Hewitt to inform him of the circumstance. He urged me to hasten back, to secure whatever my mother had written, and to command her not to attempt to hold any communication with Mr. Cargill at present. I went back, and when Susan opened the door for me I saw that she had been crying.

"When she kenned you was oot again," she said, sobbingly, "she begged and prayed me to post the letter for her, but I wouldna do it. Syne she was awfu' distressed, and I was wae for her, but I wouldna break my word to you."

"Had she the letter written?"

"Ay had she, ready for the post."

"What did she do with it?"

"When she fan' that she couldna get me to post it, she asked me for a light, and I gied her it, and I saw her burn the letter."

I thanked the girl, then joined my mother.

The table was still beside her, and a candle was burning on it. In the plate of the candlestick was a small heap of ashes, confirming Susan's statement of the destruction of the letter. I blew out the candle and put it away. Then, before speaking, I gave my mother

a dose of her medicine, hoping that it would give her some strength to hear me.

She watched my movements with a painful eagerness that alarmed me somewhat for the effect of my words. But the consequences to me were too serious to permit me to be silent. When she had taken her draught I spoke, as quietly as possible:

"You think my conduct cruel, but I cannot help that. I wish to avoid mentioning anything that may trouble you, but of one thing I am compelled to speak. You must not attempt to communicate with Mr. Cargill."

Her head sank forward upon her breast, and she made no reply. From that day to the day on which she had her second attack, the subject was not referred to between us.

I have now only a few final particulars to make known to you, and then you will be in possession of every fact which can serve to show how far I am guilty in this matter.

On the forenoon of the sixth day after the Fast Mr. Hewitt came to me in a state of great excitement. He would not speak until we had got into my room and the door was closed. Then—

"Everything is lost," he said, speaking huskily, and with a degree of agitation that alarmed me.

"What is lost?" I cried, hastily.

"Everything that we have been striving for—everything that we had so nearly gained—the proof which would have established your claim; the proof before which Mr. Cargill dared not have attempted to stand; the proof without which we are powerless—is lost, destroyed beyond hope of recovery."

"How is that—has Mrs. Gorbal been bribed?"

"No, no; worse than that."

"What can be worse than that?"

He clasped my wrists with his hands tightly, his whole body seemed to be trembling, and his voice sank to a hoarse whisper:

"Don't scream, don't move when I tell you—Jean Gorbal has been murdered and the letters burned!"

I neither moved nor cried out; I stood still like one struck with stupor, gazing blankly in his perturbed face. I was utterly confused and stupefied. For the first moment I seemed to be conscious of nothing but the wild fancy that the earth had sunk from me, and I was falling, falling into space.

"Do you not hear?" he muttered, almost fiercely; "do you not understand? I tell you the woman is dead!"

The sharpness with which he spoke recalled me to myself. I drew my hands from him and pressed them on my head, which was throbbing violently. Then, after a pause, during which we seemed to hear each other's hearts beating, I said, with a calmness that startled myself,

“And are my hopes dead with her?”

He was surprised by my manner, and it seemed to have the effect of subduing his excitement.

“Yes,” he answered, slowly, “unless we can discover who has done this, and can prove that the motive was to frustrate your claim.”

There was a significance in his manner and words that made me feel sick, for I could only think of one person who could be moved to such a deed by such a motive—my father.

“Who has done this?” I said sharply, and looking steadily at him.

He made a quick movement with his shoulders, as if taken aback by the abruptness of my question.

“Not the man you suspect,” he replied, his usual coolness returning to him; “for he has not yet arrived.”

“Who then?”

“You ask me as if I should know,” he said, evidently amazed.

“You suspect?”

“I do, but in the meanwhile I will not tell you whom I suspect.”

“Then you think there is hope of our success even yet?”

“There is hope, but it is a very slight one—so slight that were it not that we have so much to gain I would be disposed to say, let us abandon it altogether.”

“How has it happened?”

“I have not time to tell you now, even if I knew the particulars correctly. You will see it all in the newspapers; and if I can discover anything that is not known I shall tell you, although the very thought of it sickens me. Meanwhile, we must devote ourselves to arranging our plans anew.”

“What plans can we have now.”

“Only one; that is, to trace the criminal; and to help me in doing that you must, by some means, obtain fifty pounds for me.”

“It is impossible.”

“Not at all; Hadden will lend it to you.”

“I cannot ask him for more.”

“But you must. You have promised to follow my counsel in everything; it is more necessary now than ever that you should do so. When was Hadden here last?”

“Not since my mother’s illness.”

“That is lucky. He is certain to be here within a day or so. You must take him into your confidence; you must tell him everything, and show him everything, exactly as you have done with me. You must ask his advice as to what you should do under the altered circumstances, and you must conceal from him that you have said anything to me about the matter.”

“Why?”

“For this reason; he is a good fellow, but he has his vanity, and he would expect that you should have asked his advice before mine. It would render him less willing to help us, perhaps, if he learned that you had done otherwise.”

“But surely he could not expect me to have more confidence in him than in my future husband?”

“Now, now, you must not be too particular about my reasons for all this. You must do as I tell you. You can let him know the next day, if you like, that you have told me everything, but he must not fancy that I knew it before him. Then you can easily make some excuse about expenses of one sort and another, and so obtain the loan from him. Will you do it?”

I had never known Mr. Hewitt so imperative in his demand on any occasion before. I concluded that it was the result of his strong convictions, and I consented.

“You will see,” he went on, “that his advice is valuable, and that it agrees with mine. At any rate, I would not be willing to oppose anything he suggested. I must tell you a secret which I only discovered recently. Mr. Hadden is connected with the detective force, and is considered one of its shrewdest and most successful members.”

“Mr. Hadden a detective!” I exclaimed.

“Yes; it is his hobby, but he does not wish it to be known among his friends. Now, you tell him everything, and the probability is that for your sake he will take up the case with more than his usual energy, and carry it to a successful issue. That issue, I believe, will be the one we desire.”

He then instructed me as to the manner in which I should make the revelation to Mr. Hadden. That gentleman will inform you how faithfully I carried out my instructions. But before I saw him my mother was stricken down by the second attack of her malady, which, as you are aware, ultimately proved fatal.

A late edition of one of the papers had been published with a brief account of the murder at Port-Dundas. I bought the paper, and read the paragraph.

It filled me with a strange gloom and a strange presentiment of evil in the future. But, as my enemies were prepared to proceed to such dire extremities as this, I was resolved now to fight them to the last with any weapon that my hand might find.

I left the paper in the parlor. A little while after dinner I happened to be in the kitchen with Susan, when we were both alarmed by hearing my mother give a violent shriek. We rushed into the room, and found her lying on the floor writhing as with pain. She was clutching the newspaper in her hand, and I divined at once the cause of her affliction.

She had seen the notice of the murder. She had been struck by the same suspicion which had at first horrified myself, and her dread of the consequences had overwhelmed her.

I snatched the paper out of her hand and threw it away. Then, with the girl's assistance, I carried her to bed and unfastened her dress. That relieved her, and she turned upon me with an expression of rage and horror.

"You have done this!" she cried, gaspingly; "he has murdered her—you have done this—he knew that she could prove . . . both liars . . . perjured, ungrateful child . . . he is a villain, a villain and a murderer . . . you will be hung . . . both hung! My God, my child on the gallows!"

There was sufficient coherence in this wild outcry to make my limbs tremble under me with fright at the terrible suggestion it forced upon me. But I had made up my mind to a particular reading of every circumstance around me; I read them according to the meaning I *wished* to make out of them. Consequently I had little difficulty in twisting her words to suit my own view of the matter.

But I dreaded the impression they might make upon Susan, or any other person. So I sent her out of the room, and told her not to go for the doctor until I told her.

For more than an hour my mother continued to rave, rapidly becoming more incoherent. In spite of myself, however, her real meaning was thrust upon my mind.

She accused Laurence Hewitt of the murder of Jean Gorbai, and she charged me with being his accomplice in the crime.

The thought made my flesh creep and my blood curdle; then it hardened me against her and enraged me. So much so that when her frenzy had reached its height, and paralysis struck her dumb and insensible, I experienced a sense of relief.

Your tender nature will shudder at this; but don't forget my position and thoughts at the time.

I was still smarting under the wounds her words had made, when I saw Mr. Hadden; and in my passion I represented the case to him in its best light for myself, in its worst for others.

Up till the day of her death my mother continued in a state of insensibility; but I dreaded her recovery, dreaded the possibility of any one hearing her repeat what she had said to me. That will explain why I was so anxious to prevent you or Mr. Cargill seeing her, even after he had pledged himself to acknowledge me.

Mr. Hewitt made me still more anxious on this account. When I informed him of the accusation my mother had made against us he was very much agitated, but immediately recovered himself.

"The merest suspicion of this kind getting wind," he said gravely, "would ruin us both, and render our task hopeless."

After that he called frequently at the house, and repeatedly warned me not to let anybody attend to my mother but myself. Repeatedly, too, he questioned me about the doctor's opinion of her probable recovery, and caused me, on my part, to make minute inquiries on that subject.

When Mr. Tavendale was arrested on the charge of Jean Gorbals's murder I was glad that somebody had been found on whom suspicion might be legitimately cast—I mean, somebody in whom I had no interest. It relieved me of a dull, heavy burden which had been weighing me down, and the nature of which I could not have explained to myself even had I tried. But I avoided thinking of it by every means in my power.

I was amazed and somewhat shocked to learn that Mr. Hewitt had become the prisoner's agent, and endeavored to dissuade him from it. I could not move him.

"It is my policy," he said, "and you'll see that it will come all right."

"You do not believe him guilty, then?"

"No," he answered decisively. "I do not believe him guilty, and, as he is a friend of mine, I wish to serve him at a pinch."

"But you are placing yourself in an invidious position when it becomes known that you are also my adviser."

"I tell you it is my policy; it will help me towards our own end, and to that end I am fully determined to work by every means in my power. I will not stop now, even if I should discover that your claim is a false one."

I laid my hand firmly on his shoulder.

"Is there a possibility of that?" I asked.

"There is a possibility of anything in this world," he said, with a strange laugh; "but of course I only meant that I would go on even if every chance of success were taken from us."

"I would not move a step farther in the business if I thought that any combination of events could be discovered to destroy my claim."

"Whether you discovered that or no, you must go on now. I have committed myself in ways you can't guess, and we must both go on now, whether we are right or wrong."

"You are speaking in a very odd way to-night," I said quietly, and scanning his features closely.

He seemed disturbed, and laughed that strange laugh again.

"There, don't mind my manner just now; I am bothered a little, that's all. There will be a precognition of witnesses soon, and you will be called. I shall tell you what to say and do."

In the sheriff's chambers, as in all things, I followed his directions implicitly. After the examination he arranged with Mr. Cargill to see me. Of the result you are aware.

That same evening Mr. Hewitt came to me again, in a strange mood, and told me that unless he could procure two thousand pounds by twelve o'clock next day he would be ruined. It was on that account, and for him, that I was so importunate in requiring the sum from Mr. Cargill when he came here with you next morning to see my mother.

You can perhaps recall the strange utterances of my mother when, a few minutes before her death, she regained the power of speech. Every word is branded on my memory, and most prominent of all is her denunciation of Mr. Hewitt with her last breath.

You and Mr. Cargill were too deeply agitated to comprehend the real meaning of what she said. But I understood it all, and for the first time I was seriously troubled by the conviction that the dying woman spoke the truth. For the first time her assertion penetrated the thick guard of my desire to believe her words false. I felt that, lying there in the arms of death, she could not be attempting to sustain the deception which I had believed, and wished to believe, she had been practising upon me since my birth.

A cold chill struck my heart; every nerve became numbed. I remained, as you saw, calm and self-possessed; it was because every feeling had become frozen by the horror of what I had done, and by the horror of what he might have done—I say, might have done, because even then I doubted the possibility of his guilt.

When you had gone he came to me and asked me for the money. I gave it to him, but I had not power to question him; I had not power to ask him by what mysterious combination of circumstances the revelation of the scheme in Mr. Cargill's letters, the truth of which he himself had acknowledged, came to be a delusion.

I dreaded the answer too much.

But my silence and my manner disturbed him.

"What is the matter with you now?" he said, as if somewhat out of humor; "are you distressed by what Mistress Burnett said? Tut! no one observed it; no one will bother us about it; and why should you be annoyed by the ravings of a crazy woman?"

The callousness with which he spoke of the dead did not reassure me.

"You are hiding something from me," I answered steadily.

He eyed me with a curious expression, which I understand now to have been the result of his anxiety to learn how much I suspected, and how far he might trust me as his accomplice.

"I am hiding several things from you," he exclaimed, lightly, "but it is because they are of little consequence to you now. Why do you stare so hard at me? You look almost as if you were afraid of me, or wished that we had been less successful in our plans."

"I wish we had been," and there was bitterness in my tone.

"What!—when the object I have worked for and risked everything for is gained? when you are acknowledged by the millionaire as his heiress—you wish we had failed?"

"It is because I fear that you have risked too much to gain it that our success frightens me."

"Tut, Sarah! you are excited by what has passed. Don't talk that way again, or I shall begin to think that you have none of the strength of mind I gave you credit for."

"Perhaps it would have been better for us both if I had had less."

There was silence for a few seconds, and then he said abruptly:

"We must get married soon. I must see about the payment of this money. I will come to you to-night, most likely, and then I hope to find you more yourself than you are now. Good-bye."

He went away.

All that afternoon I remained in a state of torture under the conflicting horrors and hopes with which everything that had occurred had inspired me. Proud, and stern of nature, I smarted cruelly under the thought that the brilliant prosperity which had so suddenly flashed upon me, filling me with vain dreams and selfish gratification, was to be as suddenly snatched away from me, leaving me in shame and misery, the guilty accomplice of a murderer.

He owned that he had concealed several things from me. What was it he had concealed?—the truth?

That suspicion rankled in my mind, and I found no rest until I had resolved that, whatever might be the issue, when next he came I would insist upon knowing the worst.

My perturbation was attributed by Susan, and the nurse whom the doctor had called in, to the death of my mother. They endeavored to console me with the usual commonplaces people offer to the sorrowing under similar circumstances. I was most grateful to them when they ceased their attempts to console me.

Laurence Hewitt came to me that night, as he had promised to do; but he had not expected to appear before me as he did—a hunted felon.

I had my wish then: I learned the whole miserable truth. How bitter it was I pray Heaven you may never have an experience so cruel as to enable you to realize.

But I loved him, and although I shrank from his guilt, the frenzy, the distraction, into which the thought of his desperate position drove me made me ready to fly with him and share his evil fate.

I was opportunely rescued from that mad step by the arrival of his pursuers. I am calm now, and I am glad that I have been rescued. I would have been a clog upon his movements; I might have been the means of delaying him and leading to his capture. I am glad

we have both been saved the misery we should have caused to one another in keeping alive the memory and the horror of the past.

I wait now to learn that he is beyond the danger of present capture. Then I will lay this statement before you.

It contains everything relating to my motives and actions, which you cannot learn from others; and I pray that it may assist you in saving Mr. Tavendale. I have written here the whole truth. I only ask you to judge me by it.

SARAH BURNETT.

You see I have resumed my own name. I accept my real position. Now I may close the book.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AT MAVISBANK.

THE morning which dawned so dismally upon the wrecked prospects of Sarah Burnett was full of hope and light to Katie. It seemed to bring her a store of new strength; and the douce medical gentleman who, only the morning previous, had forbidden her to leave her bedroom, was astonished on this morning to find her up and moving about with unusual energy.

He accepted it as one of the most marvellous cures he had ever effected. He cautioned her to be careful not to overtask her new strength, for, although she looked well, her face was pale, and there was a nervous excitement in her eyes with which he was not altogether satisfied.

"I feel quite strong, doctor," Katie said, smiling a little sadly; "but I shall not forget your instructions. In the meantime I must ask you to see my father. A very old—friend of his died recently, and he is much affected. I am afraid the shock has done him more harm than he would wish me to believe, and I must beg of you to tell me the truth concerning him."

"Certainly, Miss Cargill, certainly; but I hope we shall find his ailment less serious than you seem to imagine it is. Shall I wait upon him now?"

"If you please; but I must tell him first that you are here."

On the previous afternoon, when Katie rejoined her father in the carriage, after her interview with Mr. Lyon, she had found him leaning back, his eyes closed, and his austere features relaxed in an expression of utter exhaustion. She had touched his arm, and he had opened his eyes wearily.

He observed her face flushed with the excitement of the hope she had found in the prospect of being able to save Alick Tavendale.

“Do you not wish to see Mr. Lyon?” she asked.

“No, not to-night—to-morrow,” he rejoined, feebly; “bid the man drive home.”

The carriage drove away, and Mr. Cargill continued to gaze upon his daughter with an expression of sorrowful concern. At length—

“You have heard something to please you, Katie,” he said.

There was a low tenderness in his voice which, more even than his changed appearance, indicated the softening influence the events of the day had had upon him.

“I have heard something to make me glad, father,” cried Katie, bending forward and clasping one of his hands. “Alick’s innocence can be proved.”

“I am glad of that. Tell me how.”

She briefly repeated to him the result of her conversation with Mr. Lyon, and when she had finished he merely said:

“I am glad of that for your sake, my child.”

Hard and cold as he had always appeared to others, to her he had been always kind; and although his kindness was mingled with a degree of austerity even to her, she had seen below the surface of his character, and had known how devotedly he had watched over her, and had tried to gratify her in all things. On that account the very coldness of his outward manner seemed to have made her love him more.

He had to be assisted from the carriage, and, in spite of the strong effort he made to conceal his weakness, she saw that he had difficulty in standing alone. She wished him to permit her to send for the doctor, but he would not consent to that.

“I’m only tired,” he said, “and a little disturbed by what has passed. Rest will restore me, and to-morrow you will find me quite strong, and prepared to do my duty to you and—to your sister, whom I have so wronged.”

The pride of his nature had been severely bruised, but there was still enough left of the old spirit to make him desire to hide his grief and shame from the eyes of others—even from the eyes of Katie.

All that evening he had remained alone. He had forbidden any one to enter his room until he rang, and until midnight he made no sound.

There was no light in the lofty apartment save that of the fire; and the massive furniture cast gloomy shadows upon the weak old man lying so still in his easy-chair that it seemed almost as if every spark of energy in his frame had been extinguished. Everything around him betokened the wealth of which he was the possessor, and now those grim shadows of his own riches seemed to point derisively at the feeble creature to whom they could give no pleasure, no hope.

The contrast between the man as he had been only a few days

ago and the man as he appeared now was so great that it would have inspired with pity even those whom his hauteur had offended most.

Step by step he had advanced in wealth and in reputation as a man of high principle, and now all the gold which had poured in upon him, the gold before which people seemed to bend and yield if he moved a finger, was powerless to rescue his name a moment from the contempt and scorn which every one would cast upon it.

Frustrated, humiliated, when he seemed strongest and proudest, he shrank from the gaze of men; he tried to shrink even from his own gaze. His thoughts were those of bitter shame or bitter regret for his own folly, and of fierce determination, now that the worst had come, to meet it with stern front, to defy the world and its scorn.

On the following morning he was still weak, but by a huge effort of will he rose from his bed. Assisted by one of his attendants he descended to the breakfast-room, and Katie was more than ever alarmed by his appearance.

He tried feebly to reassure her, and in part succeeded. But when, after breakfast, she had to assist him to the library, she insisted that he should see the doctor when he called.

"To please you, Katie, I will do as you wish, although I know that he can do nothing for me. It is only rest I require; and as soon as it is possible we shall go away to some quiet country place where our--misfortunes may be unknown, and we may be free from the eyes of the vulgar crowd."

"I will go anywhere with you, father, when Alick is safe."

"Yes, yes, when Alick is safe," he muttered, his brows contracting; and, abruptly—"You will send for Sarah to-day."

"I will go for her as I return from—Alick."

She had faltered over the last word, not because she hesitated to inform her father of the journey she proposed making, but because she found the word "prison" so hard to pronounce, and changed it to her husband's name.

Mr. Cargill made no comment upon her intimation, he asked her no questions, and seemed desirous of avoiding the subject of her relationship to the prisoner as much as possible.

When she now entered the library in order to tell her father that the doctor was waiting she found him at the table busily writing. He stopped as soon as she appeared, and told her that the doctor might come to him there, and that she was to retire during the interview.

She was not permitted time to fret herself with anxious surmises as to the result of the doctor's examination of his patient, for, just as she was leaving the library, Easton met her with the intelligence that Mr. Lyon was waiting to see her.

CHAPTER XLIV.

JUSTICE OR MERCY?

MR. LYON, with his grave face lightened by an expression of a subdued pleasure, advanced to meet Katie as she entered the room. She did not give him time to say a word. She clasped his hand with a warmth that thrilled him. She looked into his eyes with an eagerness that pained him; and, although it could not make him hesitate in his purpose, it recalled some of those vain regrets which had made him fear the source of his conviction in regard to Tavendale's case. That now, however, only strengthened him in what he had to do.

"You have brought me good tidings," she cried; "you have come to tell me that he is safe."

"I have come to prove to you that the doubt you entertained of me yesterday was unjust."

"I know that, Mr. Lyon; but you will forgive me—you have forgiven me, for you know what I was suffering when I spoke so unkindly."

She was distressed by the memory of the suspicion with which she had regarded him in the heat of her defence of her husband. He saw that, and, holding up his hand as if to ward away all further reference to the subject, he said:

"You found me yesterday callous and cruel, as you naturally thought; but you could not know how much it had cost me to assume the position I did regarding Mr. Tavendale. Remember the position in which I was placed as a man whose fondest hopes had been destroyed by him, and as a servant of justice called upon almost to pronounce judgment of life or death upon him—when you remember that I believe you will try to think gently of what appeared so harsh to you yesterday."

"You speak as if it had been you who had given offence, and not I. But don't think so poorly of me as to imagine that I do not understand how wrong I was, and how much I owe your generous kindness."

"Thank you, Miss Cargill—or let me show you how completely I have obtained the command of those feelings which are now an insult to you and an agony to myself, by calling you Mrs. Tavendale."

"Can you call me by that name, and can you tell me that I may bear it without shame?"

"I believe you may. Circumstances have come to light since yesterday afternoon which, I believe, will speedily obtain your husband's release. More than that, I believe these same facts will prove that you and your father have been subjected to an extraordinary imposition."

"In regard to what?"

"In regard to the lady who claims to be your sister. But of that I must speak to Mr. Cargill. At present I wish to tell you only of those matters which more immediately interest you."

"Then you have found some of the servants who saw him here on the evening of the crime?"

Mr. Lyon shook his head.

"No. But the lad who brought Mr. Tavendale's letter to you, and your answer to him, remembers the day well, and it was on the day of the murder. So far, that helps to prove that the letter you have got undated is the one which the lad delivered on that day."

"Only helps to prove it?"

"That is all, for there might have been other letters written. You shrink from me almost as if you were afraid that I was about to give you an argument to his disadvantage. But you must not fear that. I simply wish to show you the true value of proof for and against him."

"But is there no proof strong enough to satisfy you that he was here on that evening, as I told you?"

"Your own word is more than sufficient to satisfy me; but it is not sufficient to satisfy the law. We must have some evidence to corroborate your statement, and that we have partly found in the examination Inspector Speirs has made of the premises."

"Has he been here?"

"He was here last night. He found that the broken bottles on the top of the garden wall, close to the doorway, had been partially torn away, as if to enable some one to pass over the wall. On one of the pieces of glass he found a shred of cloth, which will no doubt serve to explain how Mr. Tavendale's clothes were torn. At the foot of the wall, on the inside, he found the ladder by which Mr. Tavendale had been assisted in reascending. At the entrance to the summer-house he discovered a small hole, which was no doubt that made by the point of Mr. Tavendale's umbrella; and on the floor he found the key of the door. All this corroborates your testimony; but, unfortunately, it does not help us much in the matter of the date."

Katie looked uneasy, and then, with a sudden glow of inspiration—

"Have you examined my maid Easton with the other servants?"

"She is the only one who has not been examined, but the inspector will see her to-day."

"I will call her now—you will speak to her yourself—she must have seen him, and I cannot rest until this matter is settled."

"Stay, I have more to tell you. There is not so much dependent upon this point now as there appeared to be yesterday. I believe that even if we should fail altogether in respect of this point in the evidence, Mr. Tavendale's safety is assured by other events."

"And they are?"

"That another man is charged with the crime, and that the proofs against him are quite as strong, if not stronger, than any that have been brought against your husband."

"God bless you, Mr. Lyon," she cried, sobbing with joy.

He stepped aside to the window to permit her to recover from her emotions, and to conceal his own.

Presently he felt her hand resting on his arm, and, looking round, he saw her bonny, tearful face upturned to his timidly.

"Can you take me to see him now?" she faltered.

"I will be ready to accompany you the moment after I have spoken to your father. But how is it you do not ask me what the circumstances are which have so altered Mr. Tavendale's position?"

"I do not care about the circumstances, I only care to know that he is safe."

So saying she conducted him to the library, at the door of which they met Dr. Lawson, who was just leaving.

"You must be careful not to excite him," whispered the doctor, as she passed into the chamber.

Mr. Lyon was struck by the altered appearance of the millionaire, but he avoided any reference to the subject.

"I have intelligence of much importance for you, Mr. Cargill," he said, after the usual greetings had passed between them; "intelligence which, I anticipate, will relieve you from some of your present annoyance."

Mr. Cargill inclined his head as if in intimation of his attention.

"But first," Mr. Lyon proceeded, "I must trouble you to answer one question. Among the letters in the possession of Miss Burnett there is one referring to an attempt made by you to obtain certain letters from the unfortunate Mrs. Gorbal."

"I remember the note you allude to."

"May I ask, then, what was the nature of those letters you were so anxious to obtain?"

Mr. Cargill's lips became compressed as with a spasm, indicating the effort he had to make to speak without agitation.

"They were letters written by me to the unfortunate woman in

reference to the fraud which was afterwards effected, and others written by the late Dr. Largie regarding the same matter."

"Do you know anything of the contents of Dr. Largie's letters—did you ever see them?"

"No, the woman would neither allow me to see them, nor part with them on any consideration."

"What was your reason for desiring to possess them?"

"To destroy them, in order that they might never be the means of an exposure. I have answered you frankly. May I inquire now why you put these questions?"

"Because I believe that had you obtained Dr. Largie's letters you would have discovered a state of matters which would have relieved you from years of anxiety, and which would have prevented the recent unhappy events."

Mr. Lyon then, as succinctly as possible, repeated the principal facts of the statement made by the husband of the deceased woman. He produced the written declaration, bearing the signatures of the various persons concerned in the conspiracy, and finished by saying that Thomas Gorbal was waiting in the hall, ready to give any information that might be required from him.

Astounded, bewildered, enraged, and relieved by turns, Mr. Cargill listened to the strange narrative.

His excitement reached its height when Katie, who had listened with quickening pulse, clasped him round the neck with a great cry of pain.

"Father! father!" was all she could say.

He gripped her in his arms with spasmodic vigor, and his fading eyes, which had been so hot and parched, were filled with tears. The strong nature of the man, which had borne in silence the agony of shame and the degradation to which the child he loved had been about to be subjected on his account, gave way now, and he sobbed as if his heart were bursting as he fondled her, knowing that she was safe from the consequences of the fraud he had long ago meditated towards her.

"Oh! Heaven is merciful to you—to me, my child," he sobbed, embracing her passionately; "but I am guilty, Katie, guilty, and you should turn from me and spurn me."

She only clung to him the more closely at that.

"It was by Heaven's mercy that my guilty scheme miscarried, but my crime is not the less, my soul is not the less black. I am unworthy of your love—unworthy to be permitted to touch your pure hand—to obtain one gentle thought in your pure heart—I am—"

"You are my father," she said, and that was all her argument, having no thought of blame to cast upon him.

His voice had been low and tender as he had murmured his re-

morse over her ; and Mr. Lyon and Katie were both startled to hear his voice rise abruptly to a harsh and angry key.

“Where is the man—the double villain—who would have committed a second murder in hanging Tavendale for his crime ? Where is he ?”

“His position as the agent for the accused enabled him to obtain early intimation of his own danger, and thus far he has succeeded in eluding the officers. But they are on his track, and in a few days they expect to be able to lay hands on him.”

Mr. Cargill laid his trembling hands on his brow, groaning—

“Oh ! blind, blind that I have been. Now I understand all that seemed only the wild ravings of a dying woman ; now I understand why, with her last breath, she denounced him as the assassin.”

“Do you mean the late Mistress Burnett ?”

“Ay, she—she understood it all ; she would have revealed the fiendish scheme that man had hatched ; and we would not trust her. But he was not alone in the plot ; he had an accomplice. Sarah !”

He uttered the name with a shriek of agony, and then covered his face as if he would hide himself from the friends who stood by him, as if he would fain have blinded himself to the horrible conclusion to which he had been led.

Katie flung her arms round him with a cry of dismay and shuddering fright.

“Do not say that, do not say that—father, father, it is impossible that she could have been so cruel, so guilty—she, who is my sister and your child.”

Her words were half stifled by the tears and sobs which swelled her heart to bursting.

“Oh, my God, I am punished !” groaned the stricken man, his feeble body swaying to and fro, his ears deaf to the appeals Katie made, his mind insensible to the consolation she tried to offer him.

Of a sudden his pitiable moans ceased, his limbs became almost rigid. He put Katie’s hands away from him firmly, but touching her with a reverent respect, as if he thought that he was unworthy even to touch one so pure.

He rose slowly to his feet, his worn visage pallid as death, and with an expression hard and grim as iron in the resolution he had taken. Traces of tears still marked his features, but they served only to give his expression additional sternness.

He laid his hand upon the bell.

“He has escaped, you say ?”—turning a little towards Mr. Lyon.

“For the present he has eluded us,” rejoined the latter, watching him curiously and anxiously.

“And you say”—faltering here—“you say that he was engaged to marry Sarah Burnett—my daughter ?”

"It is in that engagement we find the motive of his crime."

"Then she will know where he is lurking. She shall deliver him to us."

He rang the bell.

"For Heaven's sake, sir, be careful!" exclaimed the magistrate.

"I will be just—I will fulfil the duty that is appointed to me to do; it is part of my atonement."

He rang the bell again.

"Explain, I beseech you, what you are about to do?"

"To see her, to force the truth from her—to deliver her into the hands of justice, if necessary."

Katie had been standing in awe and bewilderment at his strange manner, observing his movements with timorous eyes, and when he declared the purpose which he had formed she rushed to him as if to snatch the bell from him.

He extended his arm, still respectfully and firmly keeping her back.

"You will not do this—you cannot do this," she cried. "Sarah is not the guilty woman you take her to be—she has been deceived; and although she had not been, although she were the worst and vilest you could imagine her to be—ah, sir, for all that, remember she is your daughter still."

Her words and manner caused him to regard her with that quick look of authority with which in former days he would have overborne any opposition to his will; but he checked the impulse, and retorted calmly:

"I am not cruel. I am just to you and to her."

A third time he rang the bell, and as he was doing so a footman appeared at the door.

"The carriage instantly."

The footman bowed and closed the door.

Katie dropped upon her knees at his feet, clasping his hands, and looking up imploringly at his inflexible visage.

"Ah, father, this is human justice, which knows no mercy. If she has done wrong—if she is guilty, as you think she is, should yours be the first hand to strike her?"

His head bent a little, but he made no response, his expression did not change.

"She is your daughter," Katie pleaded, with tearful face; "but have you been a true father to her? Have you watched over her as you have watched over me? Have you tended her and guided her as you have done with me? Have you given her the position to which, as your daughter, she had a right? You have done nothing of all this, and now, because she has erred, you condemn her, you would torture her by seeking to sacrifice her to what you call justice."

"Rise," he said huskily, but without any tone to indicate that he was softened by the appeal.

"Not until you have promised, for my sake, for my mother's sake, for her mother's sake, to be merciful to her now, as Heaven has been merciful to you and to me."

He raised her to her feet.

"I will be merciful, I will give her a share of my wealth, I will place her above the temptation of evil in the future, I will do all you would have me to do for her, except permit her to have a place in my house, or to be near you, if she will be honest and deliver up the murderer."

The door opened again, and the domestic announced that the carriage was ready.

"You will accompany me, Mr. Lyon," said Mr. Cargill, "to this woman's house. You shall judge between us."

The magistrate bowed.

"And I too—I will go with you," exclaimed Katie, cagerly, alarmed for the consequences to Sarah, and anxious to be present at the interview, that she might stand between her and the wrath of her father.

She did not give Mr. Cargill time to forbid her to accompany him. She ran away the instant she had spoken to procure her bonnet and cloak. She was first down at the door, and first in her place in the carriage. Mr. Lyon dismissed Gorbai, who had been waiting in the hall, and bade him not leave his lodgings, lest at any moment he should be required.

The old stern spirit stirred within the millionaire's breast, and quickened his limbs to renewed strength. In the morning he had with difficulty tottered from one room to another, assisted by his attendant or his daughter; now, only leaning a little more heavily than usual upon his staff, he descended the staircase, and took his seat in the carriage, declining the proffered aid of the domestic who followed close behind him.

The carriage stopped in front of the house in Hill Street. The closely drawn blinds, the muffled knocker, and the silence which seemed to prevail about the dwelling, gave sad intimation that death had been lately there.

As they stepped out of the carriage Katie touched her father's arm, and, with a slight movement of her hand, indicating the signs of what had just happened, she whispered :

"Recollect that her mother is lying in the house dead."

A slight shiver passed over his frame, and then, with a bend of the head, he acknowledged her request.

Mr. Lyon, who had followed them on horseback, joined them as Susan opened the door, and entered with them.

CHAPTER XLV.

FAITHFUL TO THE LAST.

THE girl looked a little frightened at sight of the visitors, and in answer to the inquiry for Miss Burnett stammered confusedly, as if she did not know whether or not to say that she was at home.

She, however, ushered them into the parlor, and abruptly closed the door upon them, without asking their names, or promising to tell her mistress that they were waiting.

Mr. Lyon stood only a few paces from the door, at which he glanced occasionally with an uneasy expression, as if he fain would have warned the lady they were expecting not to enter. Mr. Cargill stood in the centre of the room, his eyes fixed on the floor, and a nervous movement about the lips which betokened the under-current of emotion his frowning brow and hard manner subdued and concealed. Katie was by his side, alternately glancing at his face and the door. No word was spoken by any of them. Thus, for the space of five minutes, which seemed an hour. Then Sarah entered.

She was dressed in black, her hair was smoothly brushed, her face was pallid and lined with furrows of care, her eyes were dim and sunken, and her eyelids drooped over them, as if they could not bear the light of day. Her expression was one of submission, weariedly placid, unnaturally still. Her manner partook of the strange stillness, and it seemed almost as if her presence commanded silence.

Mr. Lyon was the first whom she seemed to observe, and him she greeted with a slight inclination of the head. Then slowly she turned to Mr. Cargill, but she did not hold out her hand or address him.

She stood before him as one meekly waiting to learn his wishes.

He had raised his head quickly on her appearance, and surveyed her with an expression of wrath, which gradually changed to one of bitter curiosity. Her manner was so meek, so subdued, so silent, that the angry words which had risen to his lips faded upon them, and he felt some difficulty in finding the proper mode of addressing her.

Katie had waited timorously for her father to speak, but finding him still dumb, and seeing her sister standing there almost like a criminal before a judge, her gentle nature could not endure the position, and she made a quick movement as if to take Sarah's hands.

Mr. Cargill grasped her arm with a violence that hurt her, and thrust her back.

"I have permitted you to accompany me here," he said with dignity; "I will not permit you to interfere between me and this woman; neither will I permit you to speak to her until she has shown herself repentant."

Katie was abashed, and her eyes drooped as if she could not bear to look upon her sister's humiliation. Sarah, however, only raised her eyes quietly, and met her father's gaze with a look cold and resolute as his own. Then she folded her hands, and waited for the storm to burst. To an angry man no conduct is more exasperating than that of simple patience. If she had spoken, if she had shown the least agitation of fear or sorrow, Mr. Cargill might have addressed her more calmly; as it was he burst into the heat of his passion at once.

"Evidently, madam, you have anticipated our visit, and are prepared for it."

"You told me yesterday, sir, that you would either call or send to me to-day" (this so meekly that it was impossible to say whether or not she meant it for sarcasm).

"True. Yesterday, when I thought you worthy to be acknowledged as the sister of this lady, I intended to come for you or send to-day; but it was with a different object in view than that which has brought me here now. You do not move. Good Heavens, madam! are you incapable of shame?"

"I wait, sir, to know the purpose which seems to excite you so much."

"You are either less guilty than I imagine you to be, or you are more guilty," he said constrainedly. "I own that your conduct perplexes me, but I shall not remain long in doubt as to its meaning. Yesterday I believed you to be one whom I had grievously wronged; to-day I learn that the position you claimed you have no right to, and you knew it."

He paused, as if expecting her to answer; but she did not speak or move, and he resumed, with a touch of scorn in his tone,

"I presume, madam, that it is unnecessary for me to repeat to you the wretched details of your attempted fraud and of the man Hewitt's crime?"

Her hands tightened a little upon each other at that, but she did not speak yet, and she displayed no other symptom of perturbation.

"Yesterday, believing you honest, I purposed giving you freely all you claimed; to-day, knowing you to be guilty, I have yielded to the prayers of one whose name you would have disgraced, and I purpose giving you much more than at any time you had a right to expect. I purpose giving you the means to live in affluence, and I

purpose to assist you to escape the punishment the law might inflict for your share in Hewitt's crime, if you will prove to us now that you merit one kindly thought, that you are capable of regret and repentance for the harm you have done, and for the harm you sought to do."

"I listen."

The two words dropped from her lips with icy clearness, although they were not pronounced above her breath.

"So far I am pleased that you make no vain attempt to deny your falsehood. I seek only one thing more, and then we may part, never, I trust, to see each other again. The murderer, Hewitt, I understand, was your betrothed husband; he was with you last night, and you must know his hiding-place. I am here to command you to reveal it. I am here to demand that you will make atonement to those whom you have betrayed by delivering him to the scaffold."

A slight flush had covered her pallid face at the words, "the murderer Hewitt," and as Mr. Cargill finished speaking, her breathing became quick and labored, as if with the violent effort she made to maintain her composure.

"I seek to deny nothing, sir," she said, in a low, steady voice; "I do not seek even to retaliate upon you the epithets which you have cast upon me. I do not seek to excuse myself in any way, but neither can I explain my position at present. All the opprobrium with which you can regard me I deserve, and I submit myself to it; but I can tell you nothing."

"Do you refuse to purchase your own safety, to secure your own future position, that you may screen a murderer from justice?"

"I would not purchase all that you, all that the world, could give me at the price of his life."

"Infamous! Would you leave an innocent man to perish when a word from you can place the real criminal in our hands?"

"I can answer you nothing at present."

Her thin lips closed tightly, as if she had determined that these were the last words that she would speak.

"By Heaven, you shall not thwart us. I command you to speak, and save yourself from the hangman's hands."

She was silent and immovable.

"Are you human?" he cried, exasperated beyond measure. "Look, Katie, this is the woman for whom you threw yourself at my feet, begging mercy. She for whom you wept and pleaded has neither tears nor pity. She is hard and callous as the villain with whom she would have mated herself. She knows that your husband, innocent of this crime as yourself, lies under the black charge, and she will not speak one word to rescue him, even for your sake."

Still Sarah was silent, cold and motionless as a statue.

Mr. Cargill's passion exhausted him, and he sank on a chair, weak and trembling.

"Speak to her, Mr. Lyon," he said hoarsely; "her father's voice has no power over her, but that of a magistrate may obtain the answer which neither pity nor gratitude can wring from her."

Mr. Lyon was close by her, and bending towards her he spoke in his low, earnest voice.

"I beseech you, Miss Burnett, relieve your father's anxiety, and do not lay yourself under the suspicion of wishing to risk an innocent life for that of one so guilty as Laurence Hewitt."

She was still unmoved.

Then Katie, breaking away from her father, ran to Sarah and flung her arms round her neck, sobbing.

"Sarah—my sister in shame or innocence—you will speak for my sake, if not for your own, or you will tell me why you are silent."

The woman was touched at last.

There was a moment of breathless silence in the room, during which Sarah's hands became clinched, her breast rose and fell, and her lips quivered with the passionate pain that swelled within her. Suddenly she clutched Katie's shoulders, and bent so close to her that her hot breath burned on the cheeks of the one creature who had made her feel that she was not left quite without sympathy.

"I will speak," she said in a husky whisper; "I will tell you everything I know, if when you learn my reason for being silent you command me to speak."

"Trust me, Sarah," she answered fervently; "tell me your reason."

In a passionate whisper came the response, "I loved him."

Katie drew a quick breath, and dropped her head on Sarah's shoulder. To her those three words explained all the error of the woman's life; and while they dispelled her own hopes of obtaining from her the information which her father demanded, and which would have been of so much importance to Tavendale, they seemed to warrant the sympathy she had given.

"Ah, then you cannot speak, Sarah," she sobbed on her shoulder; "and in your place I would be silent too."

Wrath and authority, threats and bribes, had all failed to shake Sarah's resolution in the least, but these few tender words made her heart tremble.

"If I dared to ask a blessing upon anybody," she said chokingly, "I would pray for one on your dear head now. Your goodness makes me a better woman; your pity helps me to endure the misery that is mine."

"I shall not torture you any more. We will go away; but when others blame you and scorn you, take courage in knowing that there is at least one who understands you."

She made a movement as if to withdraw, but Sarah held her tightly in her arms.

"Not yet; you shall not go until you know that I am not the infamous thing our father believes me to be. Before you came to me to-day I had resolved that Mr. Tavendale should be saved for your sake, come what might. But first I have another duty to do, and when I succeed or when I fail in that, all the proof that I can give to clear your husband will be placed in your hands. Now go; it is better for us both that we should part at once."

Katie could not answer this; she could only kiss her passionately and obey her.

Mr. Lyon had heard partly what had passed with much amazement at the singular change in the woman who had been so obdurate.

Mr. Cargill, who had heard nothing but the murmur of whispering voices, sat, astounded and indignant, gazing at his daughters. When Katie came to him and took his hand to lead him from the place, he rose wrathfully.

"She still refuses?" he ejaculated.

"She cannot answer us now, father. Don't be angry with her, she has sorrow to bear as well as we. Give her time; by and by she will do all that you would wish."

He advanced stiffly to where Sarah stood, again with hands clasped, head bowed, calm and inscrutable as before.

"By and by will be too late. You must answer now, or take the consequences of my displeasure and of the law's penalty."

"I have said all that I can say, sir."

He raised his hand tremblingly, and touched her on the shoulder, with a movement as if he were thrusting her from him.

"Obstinate! Have your own way, but understand you have forfeited every claim to the consideration of honest men and women. More, you have forfeited every claim to my pity or pardon. Henceforth you are as one dead to me—shame, beggary, starvation, may fall upon you, and I will turn from your cries for help as callously as you have turned from our appeals to-day. I will turn from you in your misery with a loathing that I would not feel for the most loathsome creature that Heaven permits to crawl the earth."

She shrank under his touch—she bowed her head low before the almost solemn wrath with which he banished her from his heart forever; but she only answered passively:

"I can die."

He turned his back upon her, utterly indifferent to her words; indeed, he seemed not to have heard them at all. He extended his arm to Katie, and, erect and stern, he led her to the door.

Mr. Lyon, however, had heard the words, and coupling them with

what little he had heard her say to Katie, they increased his pity for the unhappy position in which she was placed, and he remained behind a few minutes to speak to her.

"I cannot address you, madam, as perhaps my official capacity would require me; but I am here as Mr. Cargill's friend, not as a magistrate. Permit me to be your friend also."

"You are very kind, sir."

"I have no desire to endeavor to force from you the information you refuse to give your father and your sister, but as your friend I wish to warn you that you are placing yourself in a very dangerous position. The charge which is made against Mr. Hewitt is the gravest that can be made against any human creature. You are running the risk of being charged as his accomplice, and that means, perhaps, transportation, possibly death, to you."

"I am grateful to you, sir, but my course is taken—I cannot alter it."

Mr. Lyon bowed, and followed his friends.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ALICK TAVENDALE'S STATEMENT.

WHEN Mr. Lyon got outside the house Katie was watching for him at the window of the carriage. He stepped up to her.

"Can you take me to see Mr. Tavendale now?" she queried bashfully; "my father is to go with us."

"Certainly, at once."

Mr. Lyon mounted his horse, which the footman had been holding, and, preceding the carriage, rode to the prison.

The gray, gloomy walls, the rows of narrow, iron-barred windows, frightened Katie and made her tremble. But as the gate opened before Mr. Lyon, and permitted them to enter, she was almost reassured when she saw that the warders and turnkeys, save for their uniforms, were very ordinary-looking men; very civil and very respectful on the present occasion. For all that there was a close, unpleasant atmosphere about the place, which made her heart leap as she saw the massive gate swing to when they had entered, and heard the key grating harshly in the big lock. She experienced a gasping sensation, as if the place were too confined to permit her to breathe. She was disturbed by the silly fancy that she would never be able to get to the bright side of those high walls again; and she sickened at the thought that Alick Tavendale had been all this time pent up in one of those dingy little holes, from which the prison-builders seemed almost to have wished to exclude the daylight itself.

Everything around her seemed to be made of dingy gray stone and hard black iron; and she wondered if the jailers' hearts were made of the same materials. At any rate, it seemed to her that, living among these things, they could not help their natures partaking something of the character of the grim shadows which were always looming over them.

She was relieved only when the door was thrown open, and her dismal thoughts were dispelled only when she heard Tavendale's voice pronounce her name in astonishment and joy, and felt his hands touching hers.

He had been pacing the floor perturbedly, speculating upon the result of the events in which he had become involved, when the sound of the opening door attracted his attention. Then, at sight of her, the full blaze of the sun itself seemed to flash into his face, blinding and dazzling him with gladness, and he could only shout "Katie!" and embrace her.

He did not observe her father or Mr. Lyon until she, remembering their presence, blushingly disengaged herself from him and directed his attention to them.

As soon as he saw Mr. Cargill he stood looking awkwardly from him to Katie, as if seeking an explanation of this unexpected visit.

There was nothing of the criminal in his appearance. He was pale, and there were signs of intense agitation on his visage, but there was no shade of that gloomy despondency which marks the bearing of one who knows himself to be guilty, and dreads the issue of the trial which he waits. He seemed now to be thinking more of what the presence of Mr. Cargill meant than of the grave charge of which Mr. Lyon's presence reminded him.

Katie was the first to break the awkward silence which ensued.

"My father knows everything, Alick; he knew everything on the day you were first examined, and he is trying to save you. I told you he was good and kind. We should have trusted him from the first, not deceived him as we have done."

Tavendale still paused, regarding Mr. Lyon doubtfully.

"He knows everything, too," said Katie, understanding his glance; "and you may speak as freely before him as before me."

Tavendale did not seem to be quite satisfied of that. However, after a long silence, he said:

"When I persuaded your daughter to marry me secretly, it was at a moment when we both thought that your wealth, your name, belonged to another. I understand that you have acknowledged that claim; and when I am released, you will find that I can work for my wife, and prove to you that I had no thought of your fortune when I sought her. You will find—"

"Enough, sir," said Mr. Cargill, coldly, and not altogether pleased

by the manner in which he had been interrupted when he had first begun to speak ; "my daughter's position is unaltered."

"Unaltered ?—then the letters were forgeries?"

"I have hinted, sir, that this is not a time for explaining these matters. When my daughter's husband is safe from the gallows, there will be time enough for recrimination on both sides. Meanwhile our presence here concerns the dangers of your position only."

"I have no fear for myself, sir; I know that I am innocent, and now that our marriage is known, I can give those explanations which will satisfy the law, and regarding which my silence was the chief argument against me."

"It is to receive those explanations that I am here," said Mr. Lyon.

In answer to Mr. Lyon's questions he thereupon gave a clear statement of every circumstance which had tended so much to render his conduct suspicious, and to give the charge against him an apparently strong foundation so long as the motives of his action remained unknown.

"During Mr. Cargill's absence, as you know, Miss Burnett called at Mavisbank. Katie had no one to whom she could tell the strange story she heard then save myself. She shrank from writing about it to her father, lest the shock might overwhelm him while he was away from her. The subject was of too delicate a nature for her to mention it to you, Mr. Lyon; and so there was no one left to advise her but me.

"When she made the revelation to me, it recalled vaguely to my mind some things I had heard my mother say about a Mrs. Burnett, with whom Mr. Cargill had been mysteriously associated. As Katie was satisfied that the letters she had read had been written by her father's hand, that fact, combined with the memory of my mother's words, made me give credence to the story perhaps too readily.

"I became alarmed for the unhappy position in which Katie would be placed; I believed that an opportunity had come when I, poor as I was, might be able to shield her from shame, and that I might prove to her father that all his wealth had no share in my regard for her. I told her that there was only one means of rescuing her from the disgrace that seemed to threaten her, and that was by becoming my wife. She was frightened and vexed by my proposition at first, but after two days my arguments prevailed—she consented.

"It was on the twelfth of the month that she told me of Sarah Burnett's claim, and on the fourteenth we were married by license. I wish here, sir, to be as minute as possible in every detail of my conduct during these few days, as I understand the evidence regarding it given by my landlady has had some influence against me. Knowing what I heard on the twelfth, you will have no difficulty in

understanding the state of nervous excitement I was in that night and the following day. You see, it will account for everything I did that seemed so strange to Mrs. Marshall and her servant.

“I was absent from the office two days—in fact, three days, from the thirteenth. I only called there to see if there were any letters. The cause of my absence was a simple one: I was too much excited to attend to any business; and, besides, I was busy seeking a house, and preparing it to receive my wife at the first moment when the exposure came. All this I had to do secretly, in order to avoid hastening the catastrophe. Hence the mysterious character of my conduct.

“I found a small cottage near Bowling which promised to afford us seclusion and comfort, and I took it for a year. The landlord’s name is John McCallum, and he resides at Bowling. You will easily find him and he will corroborate what I say, and give you the dates of my visits to him.

“Next, I had to furnish the cottage, and on that account I was much occupied with Messrs. Gowan Brothers, furniture-dealers, Howard Street. Before they would execute my order they required me to place in their hands a hundred pounds, and they would give me credit for the rest. Of that sum I was five pounds short, and I borrowed the amount from Mrs. Marshall. She had lent me money before, and I thought she was least likely to suspect my purpose. I rolled the notes up together and placed them in an envelope for Messrs. Gowan.

“I decided to acquaint Mr. Cargill with the important step I had taken by letter, in the first place. I had little fear now of what he might say, as I calculated that he would be too much afflicted by the exposure to deal over-harshly with me. But I felt much delicacy in approaching the subject to him; and I wrote more than a dozen letters, and burned them as fast as they were written, before I could produce one to please me. In prospect of speedily leaving my lodgings I began to arrange my things and to get rid of a heap of useless letters, and I burned them. These were the documents I destroyed, without ever dreaming that the destruction of them would draw so much suspicion upon me.

“There are only two more items of importance to which it is necessary for me to refer. On the Saturday previous to the murder I called at the house of the woman Jean Gorbai. I had been there once before with a message from Mr. Cargill, and so I knew the place. I had to call several times before I saw her, and when I did see her I could obtain no satisfaction from her. She laughed strangely as I spoke to her, and one observation struck me as singularly odd. She said, ‘One may as well have it as another for me, and the one that tries most gets most.’

“I attributed her odd words and manner to the effects of drink,

and so left her, dissatisfied with the result I had obtained, and determined to see her again as soon as Mr. Cargill returned. But my interview with her had left me exceedingly anxious, and I desired to speak to my wife as speedily as possible. Our cottage was to be ready in three days, and I had thought of persuading her to go to the place that was now her home even before her father's arrival.

"On the day on which the murder appears to have been committed I sent Mrs. Marshall's son with a note to Mavisbank, begging Katie to consent to my new proposal, or at any rate to see me that evening. The lad came back without any answer. I thought she was angry with me, and I was agitated by her silence. By and by, however, a man came with a note from her, directing me to meet her at dusk in the garden at Mavisbank, and I was there at a quarter past six o'clock.

"I had to climb the wall, as we were unable to open the door. Our conversation was one of the greatest importance to both of us, and it was nearly twelve o'clock before we parted. The issue of that interview between us was that she not only refused decisively to leave her father's house until he had been informed of her marriage, but she begged me not to send the letter I had written to him. With the generous courage she always shows when there is trouble to be encountered, she wished to be the first to tell her father of what had happened, and to brave his anger. But, before doing that, she wished to see how he would be affected by the exposure which was imminent. She therefore desired me to leave it entirely to her discretion to decide upon the time when she should disclose our relationship. She charged me neither to speak nor to write about the subject without first having obtained her permission. She adopted this course not because she wished to delay the discovery of her error—if, under the circumstances, you could call it error—to her father; but because, fearing that he might be annoyed in learning that she was my wife, and knowing that he would be distressed by Miss Burnett's disclosure, she wished to spare him as much as possible any knowledge that might add to his affliction.

"She commanded me to be silent, under any circumstances, until she had spoken. It was with bitter reluctance that I promised to obey her, but I did promise, and I have faithfully observed it, as you know.

"I was nervously excited by what had passed and by the prospect of what was to come; and instead of going home straight, I took a long walk round by the Kelvin. It was a disagreeable night of rain and wind; but I did not mind that, for the exercise seemed to soothe me. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning when I reached my lodgings. My landlady had waited for me, and seemed to be surprised by my appearance. I was vexed that she should have observed my disturbed manner, and that I had put her to the

inconvenience of sitting up so late for me. My reason for asking if the door had been fastened was not because I heard the policeman passing, but because I wished to save trouble by doing it for her, as I had been accustomed to do whenever I happened to be the last to enter the house. I had walked the last mile or two very slowly, and felt cold in my wet clothes, so that I shivered a little when I spoke to her. During the next day I did not feel well, and that, combined with the very fretful nature of my thoughts, rendered my humor none of the best.

"It was late that night before I became aware of Jean Gorbal's fate ; and after the first shock of horror I own that I experienced a feeling something akin to relief, in the hope that her death would either prevent the threatened exposure altogether, or at any rate would considerably reduce its consequence. But, believe me, sir, that cruel as the feeling may seem to you, it affected me not with any view to my own advantage, but wholly on account of the relief I calculated the woman's death would give to Katie and her father in sparing them the shame that was about to fall upon them.

"I have now given you a full explanation of my conduct. You can understand why I was silent regarding the manner in which I spent the evening of the crime. But do not think that I had any foolish thought of sacrificing my life in order to be faithful to the promise I had given to my wife. I knew that as soon as she became aware of my predicament she would hesitate at no step that was necessary to release me. I therefore only waited until she had time to speak. She has spoken, as I knew she would, and I suppose that there can be little doubt now of my innocence."

"I should like to know how Mr. Hewitt came to be your agent," struck in Mr. Lyon, after a pause.

"I became acquainted with him some time ago through Mackie and Milne, two clerks in Mr. Cargill's office. He used to come up to my lodgings occasionally with them. I was somewhat an enthusiast in the exercises of fencing and boxing, and Hewitt frequently practised foil-play with me. I think it was on the last occasion that they were up, previous to my arrest, that the foil was broken which has been used in evidence against me."

"Did you mention that before?" queried Mr. Lyon.

"Yes, I think I mentioned it to Hadden when he arrested me. However, I merely tell you this to show you that Hewitt was somewhat familiarly acquainted with me, and I liked him very much. As soon as he heard of my arrest on this charge, he came to me and insisted that I should permit him to act as my agent, as a matter of friendship and free of all cost. He told me that he had no doubt he would be able to pull me through; and although at the

time I had no thought of employing any agent, and did not consider it necessary, I consented to let him act for me."

"I begin to see his course quite clearly. You will be surprised to learn that the man who is suspected of being the real criminal is Hewitt."

"Impossible!" cried Tavendale, astounded.

But Mr. Lyon speedily put him in possession of the principal facts which had come to light, and his amazement changed to conviction.

"Then he must have taken away the broken portion of the foil, which could not be found," cried Tavendale.

"It has been discovered in his office. Now I think we may leave you, and before many days have passed I think you may calculate upon being a free man with an unblemished character. You have sincere friends working on your behalf."

"I am sure of that," said the prisoner; and then, hesitatingly, he turned to the millionaire: "And you, Mr. Cargill, are you satisfied? May I hope that my offence to you in secretly marrying your daughter is not unpardonable?"

Mr. Cargill slowly extended his hand, which Tavendale clasped in his eagerly, and the male visitors left the cell. As they did so, Mr. Cargill offered his arm to his daughter to take her with him; but Mr. Lyon, with a quiet smile, took his arm and led him out of the cell, saying, "Your daughter will follow us presently."

"Katie, you never doubted me!" cried Tavendale as soon as they were alone, scanning her features with eager delight; "everybody thought me either a great fool or a great rascal, but I knew that you would come to my rescue. I knew that you would light up the darkness that had fallen upon me, and you have done it, my darling!"

As a comment upon this she was favored with an enthusiastic hug, and for several seconds she found it impossible to speak, her lips being otherwise fully occupied. At length, however, she did manage to obtain freedom enough to say reproachfully:

"But Alick, Alick, why did you not send for me the instant you were placed in danger?"

"Well, I did send for you as soon as it was possible to do so."

"You did send—when and whom?" this with such a pretty look of alarmed surprise that she only narrowly escaped falling into the lion's clutches again.

"Hewitt."

"He never came to me."

"I sent him twice—the infernal scoundrel!—and his answer to me on both occasions was that you were ill, confined to your room, and could not be seen by any one. I had told him not to give my note

to any one except yourself, and so his answer, while it alarmed me for your health, satisfied me that he had made the attempt to fulfil his mission."

"Did he return the letter to you?"

"No, he kept it to make a third attempt to see you; and, if he failed, then he was to intrust it to Easton."

"I do not believe he ever made the attempt to see me—and yet I have been ill, and he must have been at the house to have learned that—I believe he has opened the letter. What did you say in it?"

"I only mentioned that the one difficulty in my case was that of proving where I spent the evening of the fifteenth."

"It was enough to make him desire to prevent you communicating with me, fearing that the proof of your innocence would endanger his own safety."

"Well, who cares now? I don't; and, faith, as things have turned out, I am not sure—nay, I am quite sure, that all the trouble I have endured was worth the bearing, since it gives me you. Ah, my lass, I am a careless, stupid fellow, but I think there are few things the strongest or wisest man could bear that I would not bear for your sake."

At that point, as she saw him about to become gloomy and serious, with some vague sense of his own unworthiness of so much happiness, she placed her little hand on his mouth and stopped him, smiling:

"They have been dark days for all of us, Alick, but we are getting into the sunlight now."

CHAPTER XLVII.

A MODEL POST-OFFICE.

MR. HADDEN had made all his arrangements with that nervous promptitude which characterized him. Although he had yielded so far to his great liking for Sarah—a liking which had a degree of the element of love in it—to warn her that if she were not careful she would become the main instrument in effecting Hewitt's capture, he had placed his men before he had called upon her.

He had one man at the bank in the garb of a porter, and he had another in Hill Street. At the latter place he had also left Willie, as it was the most important point of observation. He himself kept constantly moving between the two traps.

The day passed without any result. Hewitt had not appeared at the bank or Hill Street, and neither had any one who could be suspected of being a messenger of his been seen.

He was not at all surprised at this. He did not expect the capture to be an easy one or a speedy one. At the hour when the bank closed, however, he learned from the manager that an order written by Mr. Cargill for two thousand pounds had been cashed early in the forenoon.

"By whom?" cried Hadden, startled and confounded.

"By Cargill & Co.'s cashier," answered the manager.

Hadden drew breath again. Clearly that could not be the order Hewitt held. The fact that the amount had been the same, however, rendered him somewhat uneasy, and he began to fear that he had made another blunder in not having placed a watch on Mr. Cargill's office.

Thither he hastened now, and was just in time to see the cashier before he left for the day. To his inquiry as to whether the order which had been drawn by Mr. Cargill was in the way of business or not, he received the reply:

"No, it was to meet the expenses on behalf of poor Tavendale."

"Who presented it?"

"Tavendale's agent, Hewitt, this morning. He was here when I arrived, and as he told me that the money was wanted immediately, I went to the bank for it myself, and he waited here till I returned."

Hadden's jaw dropped with astonishment at the unexampled boldness and coolness of the criminal, and with chagrin at his own stupidity. He said nothing of that to his informant. As soon as he had recovered himself he only asked in what form the money had been paid.

"By his express desire I got two hundred in gold, and the rest in Bank of England notes of fives, tens, and twenties."

"Have you got the numbers?"

"Yes; but why are you so curious about the matter?"

"Give me the numbers," said Hadden, excitedly. "Hewitt is under suspicion, and we wish to trace him; the notes may help us."

His request was complied with, and he departed. He was enraged with himself; but, unfortunate as the oversight had been, it left one thing clear; his conclusion was correct that Hewitt had not left the city.

There was no saying when he would start now that he had got the money. So Hadden despatched a man to Edinburgh with a copy of the numbers of the notes, and a brief report of what had happened, to Mactier. Then he placed men at every railway station, at every wharf, and along every omnibus route. He was certain that Hewitt would rather intrust himself to a public conveyance than to a private one. Nevertheless, he caused every posting-house in the city to be visited, and the proprietors warned to send

instant notice to the police in the event of any gentleman without companions desiring to hire a conveyance.

"Now," he muttered, "there is only one chance left for him, and that is to get clear of the city on foot."

He relieved the man who had been placed at Hill Street, and left two in his stead, who were not to lose sight of the door of Sarah Burnett's house during the whole night.

It was after midnight before he withdrew himself, and he was up next morning by daybreak. He had told his men to send for him the moment anything suspicious occurred, or any suspicious person was observed. But he was not disturbed on this account.

The same vigilant watch was preserved all that day and the ensuing night. Still without result. The only persons who called at Hill Street during the day were the milkman, the grocer, the collector of water-rate, and the undertaker, with three of his men, who brought the coffin for Mrs. Burnett. There could be no particular suspicion attached to any of them.

On the third morning Hadden met the postman about a hundred yards from the house in Hill Street. He stopped the man, as he had done several times already.

"Any letters for Miss Burnett this morning?"

"Yes, one."

"Show it me."

The man had been made aware of his authority, and therefore did not hesitate to show him the letter.

It was addressed in a round, open penmanship, with various wavering lines, several of which had been retouched to complete the form of the letters. This labor displayed the effort on the part of the writer to disguise the real character of his penmanship. But in spite of the disguise—or, rather, in consequence of it—the detective identified the calligraphy as that of Hewitt. The post-mark was Edinburgh; the date that of the day previous, showing when and where it had been posted.

Hadden returned the letter to the postman, and as the latter proceeded to deliver it, the baffled detective clasped his hands on his staff behind him, and moved slowly and meditatively up the street.

The evidence before him now seemed to indicate clearly that spite of all his efforts the fugitive had eluded him, and was now either in the hands of Mactier or across the Channel. He was utterly perplexed; all his vigilance had been so far in vain, and apparently there was nothing for him to do but to start at once for the capital and take up the track there.

And yet he hesitated. At the corner of St. George's Road he came to an abrupt halt. He struck his staff upon the pavement

with so much vehemence that two or three passengers paused to stare at him. He wheeled about, and slowly retraced his steps.

"No," he muttered; "I'll stay where I am. He had no intention of going to Edinburgh, or he would never have told Nicol Ogg that he was going there. This letter is another ruse to mislead us. On the day he got the money he sent that letter to some friend in Edinburgh who has posted it for him. There has been plenty of time for that trick to have been played. He is here yet, waiting till we are thrown off the scent, and then he will have a clear course to get away in the opposite direction."

A few steps forward and he halted again.

"There is one means of proving whether or not he told Ogg the truth. If that draft he gave him was a forgery he would have as much reason for misleading him as to his whereabouts as us."

He made another journey to Mr. Cargill's office, and there learned that a draft exactly similar to the one which had been cashed for Hewitt had been presented at the bank by one Nicol Ogg, and discovered to be a forgery.

Hadden returned to his post in Hill Street satisfied.

He found one of his scouts waiting for him with the information that from all quarters reports had been brought in that nothing had been seen of their prey. Every hotel and tavern, every lodging-house, from the most respectable down to the most disreputable in the town, had been searched without revealing the remotest trace.

Hadden told his satellite to keep all the men at their posts, and to repeat the hunt through the lodging-houses later in the evening.

Hadden had been for some time aware that Hewitt calculated the effect of every step he took with geometrical precision, and he now began to realize the principle upon which he made these calculations.

His system was simply to do whatever seemed too bold and too certain to result in detection for any man in his position to do. He knew that his pursuers were accustomed to work in particular grooves; that they calculated—ninety-nine times out of a hundred, perhaps, correctly—that what one rascal had done before, the next would repeat. Hewitt was the hundredth rascal, however, and whatever seemed the most improbable for him to do under the circumstances was just the course he adopted.

"That's his system," ejaculated Hadden to himself, fretfully; "and at this moment there is not the least doubt he is laughing in his sleeve at us in some hiding-place under our noses; and just because it is under our noses we can't see it. Where is the most unlikely of all places that he might be? that is the question. If I

could answer that, I could lay my hands upon him in half an hour."

As, however, he could not answer that important question, although he cudgelled his brains all day to find it, he was obliged to wait till some lucky event suggested it to him; and he devoted himself to a close observance of what were apparently the most commonplace circumstances, and of the most ordinary people.

About dusk he went home for dinner; he had been too much occupied during the day to think of it earlier. He had scarcely sat down to it when Willie rushed into the apartment.

Hadden jumped up.

"There's somebody come out of the house!" cried the lad.

"Who—who?"

"A woman, a' in black, and a veil over her face. I think it's hersel'."

By "hersel'" he meant Miss Burnett. Hadden seized his hat and staff and hurried out with Willie, who led him in the direction in which he had seen the lady walk—namely, along Sauchiehall Street.

She had been walking very slowly, and the pursuers soon had her in view.

Hadden experienced many twinges of conscience in playing the spy upon Sarah; but he compressed his lips and tried to soothe himself by the reflection that if she were to be the instrument of justice she made herself so in spite of his warning. That being so, he must curb whatever compunctions he might feel for her sake, and do his duty for Alick Tavendale's sake.

Sarah seemed to be altogether unconscious that her movements were observed. She halted at two or three shops and gazed for a few moments at the windows, when it was possible that she might, by a side-glance, have scanned the route she had traversed; but otherwise she did not turn her head, or show any anxiety as to the possibility of being followed.

She turned up St. George's Road, and, still walking very slowly, proceeded to the Cowcaddens. It might be that she had no object in view; that she was merely taking a walk, which would account for the roundabout route she followed, and for her leisurely pace.

Hadden fervently prayed that it might be so, for he would rather have endured a thousand times more annoyance in the pursuit of Hewitt than he had done, or was likely to do, than arrest him by means of her. But his wish was denied him, for when she got into the Cowcaddens it became evident that she had a motive for this stroll in the gloaming. Instead of turning towards home she moved in the direction of Port-Dundas. That, of all places, Hadden thought she would have avoided.

Worse and worse, she seemed to be steadily moving in the direction of the late Jean Gorbal's house. The unhappy detective, whose affection pulled him one way and whose duty pulled him another, was relieved when she altered her course, by suddenly branching to the right up a narrow lane.

The daylight was rapidly fading, and in this lane, with its dingy little houses, it became difficult to keep her in sight without approaching her too closely. Here Sarah quickened her pace for the first time, as if she were near the end of some unpleasant journey, and eager to get it over.

Near the head of the lane, where it was crossed by a street running at right angles up to the canal and down to the main thoroughfare, she suddenly disappeared.

Willie ran forward to the place where they had lost sight of her. He found himself opposite a weaver's shop, from which proceeded the din of busy shuttles: beside the weaver's door was a low, dark close. Above the mouth of the close was a small signboard, about three feet long and two feet broad, bearing the inscription,

"JOHN WADDELL, Boot and Shoe Maker,
Repairs Neatly Executed."

The bottom of this signboard was close to the wall, while the top projected about four inches. The shoemaker's window was immediately above, and amid the din of the shuttles was heard the clatter of his hammer on the lapstone.

As Willie approached the close he observed in the dim light of the place a white hand thrust out to the corner of the signboard. It rested there a moment, and then withdrew quickly.

Willie darted into the weaver's doorway, and straightened himself against the wall.

Sarah Burnett passed out of the close, proceeded in the direction of the cross street, and disappeared round the corner.

When Willie had assured himself of that, he ran back to Mr. Had-den and brought him to the place.

The detective, with a stifling sensation in his throat, put up his hand to the corner of the signboard, and between it and the wall felt a paper. Once more for her sake he hesitated to draw down what he knew must be a letter to Hewitt; and again for Tavendale's sake he forced himself to the task. He drew out the letter from this strange post-office. There was no address on the envelope, which was only closed with gum. The detective wetted with his tongue the gummed edges, and speedily succeeded in opening it without tearing the paper.

He left Willie standing at the close while he walked on to the nearest street lamp. There he succeeded in deciphering the contents

of the fatal missive. They were very brief, without address or date of any kind.

"The house is still watched. Your trick has apparently failed to deceive the person whom you most wish out of the way. He seems to understand your purpose in lurking here. Change your plan and escape to-night. Let me know when you are safe."

Hadden, with trembling hands, refolded the letter, replaced it in the envelope, and fastened it. Then he returned to the shoemaker's sign, and put the letter back where he found it. Nobody had been there during his absence.

By what means this plan of communication had been arranged he could not guess, but its cunning made him almost regret that such a clever fellow as Hewitt was doomed to be hanged.

Now, where was his hiding-place? Somewhere near, because he must come for this letter, and he would not unnecessarily expose himself by too long a journey. The area of speculation was now limited, but still the answer was difficult to find.

Hadden passed through the close, taking Willie with him, and seated himself on the outside stair which led up to the dwelling of the shoemaker whose sign had been forced into such singular service.

Hadden remained upon the watch while he despatched Willie to bring Inspector Speirs and half a dozen men. It should not be for want of force that the culprit escaped this time.

The lad was absent for more than three or four hours, and during that period nobody called at the post-office of which the detective was the guardian. Waiting alone in the darkness, his mind was busy with the problem as to the hiding-place. Suddenly he bounded to his feet with a smothered ejaculation of mingled triumph and horror.

"Thunder! Heavens above! it cannot be possible! Yet it's just the place that he would go to—he has courage or anything—and it's just the place where nobody would ever suspect him of being. Hewitt's hiding-place is in Jean Gorbals's house."

The house of the unfortunate woman was near this place where Hewitt had to call for his letters; it was locked up and the keys in custody, which circumstance, combined with the fact of the crime having been perpetrated there, would promise him almost perfect immunity from discovery. As to getting in, he would have no difficulty in forcing an entrance, and no mere superstitious qualms of conscience would be strong enough to prevent him from availing himself of such advantages.

Improbable as the theory seemed, it was worth putting to the test.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FIGHTING IT OUT.

It was nearly nine o'clock when Willie rejoined his chief. He brought with him Inspector Speirs and six men. The inspector had been out seeing that the detectives were at their respective posts, and Willie had been obliged to seek him nearly all over the town. That was the cause of the delay.

The moment Hadden saw Speirs he rushed towards him excitedly.

"Where are the keys of Jean Gorbal's house?" he cried.

"At the station-house—what do you want with them?" exclaimed the inspector, amazed by the manner of the demand as well as the nature of it.

"Our man is there—in that house. Send one of the men for the keys, and tell him to follow us to the house."

The inspector stared at him as if he thought that his senses had fairly forsaken him; but presently he obeyed his command, and prepared himself to accompany Hadden. The latter had already told the men to separate, and meet at the house at which the murder had been perpetrated with as much speed as possible. He bade Willie run on before.

Speirs took his arm and walked with him down the lane.

One by one the men arrived. Hadden sent two of them round to the back of the house, placed two more at the windows, and reserved the others for the door.

He crept to the door himself first; he peered through the keyhole, but discovered no gleam of light within. Next he listened breathlessly, straining his sense of hearing till the tympanum of his ear seemed about to crack.

He withdrew suddenly and rejoined Speirs, who, by the help of a lamp close by, was enabled to see that his features were quivering with excitement.

"He's there!" he gasped; "he's there! We have him at last. Where are the keys?"

"What!" ejaculated the inspector, "hiding where he murdered the woman!"

Hadden clapped his hand on the man's mouth.

"Thunder!" he growled, in a suppressed tone; "will you hold your noise? he'll hear you."

Speirs now became satisfied that there was some meaning in the detective's mad notion. He crept to the door himself, listened, and came away convinced.

The man arrived with the keys, and Hadden snatched them from him.

"Now," he said, "get your batons ready, for you'll need them. Keep your eyes open, for if he once breaks through us he'll give us the slip in the darkness. Knock him down at the first rush he makes."

With the men close behind him, their teeth clinched for a sharp tussle, he again advanced to the door. As stealthily as possible he placed the key in the lock, turned it, and pushed with all his might.

But the door did not move.

"He has it barricaded," growled Hadden, furiously. "Look to the windows! One of you run to the smith's shop and get hammers. Bring the smith with you."

His rapid directions were as rapidly obeyed; and in the meanwhile, waiting the arrival of the smith, he knocked authoritatively on the door.

"Laurence Hewitt, in the name of the law, I charge you, open!" he said loudly.

There was no response. The summons was repeated twice without effect.

"Yield yourself prisoner," cried Hadden again; "escape is impossible; the house is surrounded, and in five minutes we will be upon you in spite of your barricade. Do you hear, man? It is madness to attempt resistance."

There was no answer to this either for several minutes, and by that time the smith had arrived with a couple of sledgehammers.

Dark as it was, a crowd was beginning to gather with that mysterious rapidity with which crowds grow at any scene of excitement, however out of the way.

Speirs seized one of the hammers and struck the first blow with a vigorous hand. As the sound of the blow rang through the house with a dismal sound, there was a movement heard within, as if a table had been upset on the floor.

Then a voice was heard, resolute and fierce, that awed the people around into breathless silence, coming as it did in the darkness from a place of such ghastly associations.

"Stop, Hadden," cried the voice, "and listen to me. You have run me to bay once more; but if you or those with you care for life you will stop where you are. I know that my capture means death, and I prefer to die before being captured. I tell you and those with

you I hold six of your lives in my hand, and I will take them pitilessly if you persist in attacking me. Every blow you strike at that door is the death-knell of one of you."

"Do you submit?" shouted Hadden.

"Do you desist?" retorted Hewitt, quite coolly, and there was the sharp click as of the raising of a pistol-hammer.

"We must do our duty."

"Do it then, and take the consequences. I have warned you."

"Strike!" shouted Hadden; "down with the door!"

The men hesitated, however, and the blacksmith flung down his hammer.

"You can do as you like yersel', but I'm no gaun to meddle wi' that chap onyway," he said, as he drew back among the gaping crowd.

Hadden snatched up the hammer the man had dropped and attacked the door, shouting as he did so:

"Strike, Speirs, if you've got the pluck of a sparrow!"

The crowd raised a shout of encouragement and admiration, and the inspector, who was no coward, although he had hesitated at the threat of the desperate man within, was incited by his comrade's example, and joined with a will in battering down the door. The timbers soon began to crack and give way. But as the upper half of the door was knocked in a volume of smoke rushed out, blinding the assailants and driving them back.

Another shout rose from the crowd—this time one of appalled amazement; and the cry ran from lip to lip:

"He has set the house on fire—he wants to burn himself!"

"Not he," gasped Hadden, recovering; "I know him better; he wants to throw us into confusion and so escape. To it again, Speirs, and we'll have him yet!"

As they made the second attack upon the door they were met by the fierce flames which had seized the woodwork surrounding it, and the chairs and tables barricading it. The fire, while it spared them half their work, also served to keep them at bay. The wood was dry and old, and the flame, once seizing it, spread with terrible rapidity under the influence of a sharp wind that was blowing. Half a dozen men ran for the fire-engines, and during their absence Hadden and Speirs were obliged to give up the attempt of entering the house. Fierce tongues of flame now shot out at the windows and the four corners of the building, illuming the excited faces of the crowd with a lurid glare, while dense volumes of smoke were occasionally swept into their eyes by the wind, driving them backward.

Hadden moved round about the place with nervous agitation, muttering to himself; watching every corner, and giving wild commands which nobody would obey.

Of a sudden there rose a shout from the back of the house, which startled the crowd and caused a sudden rush in the direction indicated.

"He's on the roof!" was the cry. All eyes were strained in that direction, and as the smoke and flames were occasionally cleared away by the gusts of wind, the figure of a man became visible on the roof. He seemed about to leap into the midst of the crowd, and then, observing that all eyes were turned towards him, he drew back. A cloud of smoke rose and enveloped him, hiding him from sight.

Then there was a loud rumbling crash, as the roof of the slim building fell in.

"He's killed!" was the exclamation which now swelled up from the crowd.

By this time one of the fire-engines had arrived, and began to play on that part of the house where the man was supposed to have fallen, which was towards the back.

"We must have him alive at any cost," cried Hadden, running round to the back.

When he got into the little yard he saw the men he had placed there dragging something away from the burning house. The something was Hewitt; his head severely bruised, his clothes torn and scorched. In his hand he still clutched the revolver with which he had intended to clear his way through the midst of his assailants. But he now lay insensible and motionless as death, his visage livid and distorted by an expression of demoniac rage and despair.

The constables explained how it had happened. He had ascended to the roof by means of a small skylight, intending, no doubt, to leap down under cover of the smoke, and to make his escape in the confusion caused by the fire. Observing the men on guard at the back, he had rushed towards the front of the building, trusting to the height of the excitement there attracting all eyes to the door.

But the watchers behind having raised the shout of alarm, Hewitt became aware that he was seen, and besides, the flames at the front helped to drive him back. Thereupon he turned and made a spring towards the men in the yard. At that instant the roof gave way, breaking the force of his spring, and he fell head foremost at the feet of the men whom he had been about to attack.

Hadden had him conveyed into a neighboring house, while he despatched messengers in search of a doctor, anxious that everything might be done to restore him sufficiently to obtain from him a confession. A medical gentleman arrived, and, after examining the wounded man, ordered him to be removed to the infirmary.

All that night Hewitt lay in a comatose state, breathing slowly

and heavily. Hadden remained by his side, steadfastly watching for the first signs of returning consciousness. But he neither moved nor spoke; his eyelids, partly open, disclosed the orbs within, dull, glazed, and bloodshot, ghastly in the traces they bore of the passions which had swelled within him at the moment he had been stricken down. Towards morning he began to move slightly, and to utter low, feeble moans at long intervals. Later these symptoms of returning consciousness became more frequent, and the eyelids closed, as if the morning light pained his eyes.

Hadden now sent Speirs, who was in attendance, for Mr. Lyon, and resumed his eager watch. About noon Hewitt's eyes slowly opened, wandered round the ward, and rested upon Hadden with a strange, inquiring gaze, in which memory seemed to be slowly dawning. Then his visage became flushed, and his right hand feebly searched about as if to clutch something.

"Curse you!" he groaned, with helpless rage. "Keep back—it is a desperate man you have to deal with, and I will fight for liberty to the death!"

He seemed to have taken up the thread of his life at the point where it had been interrupted. For the moment he still imagined himself to be on the roof of Jean Gorbals's burning house, attempting to escape his pursuers. His hand had moved in search of the revolver, and, not finding it, he made a desperate effort to rise. But the mere effort utterly exhausted him, and again he lay motionless, groaning.

In this state he remained for nearly an hour, and by that time Mr. Lyon had arrived. An attempt was made to obtain from the man, who had now evidently so short a time to live, a confession of his crime; but all the efforts of Hadden and Mr. Lyon produced no other effect than to cause Hewitt's eyes to open and to glare upon them with a venomous light.

Every means of persuasion were adopted without effect; he would tell them nothing. At length Hadden abruptly begged Lyon to remain there till he returned, and hurried out of the place.

In half an hour he came back, bringing with him a lady dressed in black and closely veiled.

It was Sarah Burnett. She stood a moment at the foot of the patient's bed, gazing upon him without any outward sign of emotion. Then with a slow, steady step she advanced to his head, and bending over him, touched his hand with her own. Her voice trembled as she spoke low and pleadingly:

"Laurence, look up; it is I who am here."

The man opened his eyes as she raised her veil, disclosing her face, with its marks of the cruel anguish she had endured and was enduring.

"You, too," he gasped feebly, trying to clasp her hand; "but they cannot touch you—they shall not touch you, for you had no hand in it."

It was the one gleam of generosity which his callous nature had displayed.

"Will you tell them all, for my sake?"

There was a long pause before he made answer. Then—

"Yes, I will do it for your sake. It is the only kindness I have ever done you, and it will be the last."

Hadden was prepared with everything necessary for the occasion. A table was drawn close to the bed, so that the lowest tones might be heard, and writing materials were ready. He instantly seated himself and motioned to Mr. Lyon to proceed.

Partly in answer to the questions of the magistrate, and partly following out the train of his own thoughts, Hewitt made his statement. He spoke slowly and painfully, frequently requiring to pause in order to recover strength for utterance, and to collect the threads of his weakened memory, recapitulating much with which the reader is already acquainted, and which, therefore, we shall not repeat.

"I found Jean Gorbal greedy and pliable to any extent under the promise of money and the influence of drink. She agreed to join me in a conspiracy to show that Sarah Burnett was the legitimate daughter of Cargill. But, although she was pliant, I did not think she could be trusted. She would not part with the letters on any consideration. She consented to the conspiracy, however. I brought her to my office while Sarah was there, and managed to give her conversation a color which caused Sarah to believe that the discovery she had made was correct in every detail. Having succeeded in making her unconsciously my accomplice, I sent her away. I would not trust even her with the truth, chiefly because I did not think she would consent to my desperate project. I visited Jean Gorbal several times, endeavoring to persuade her to destroy the letters. She still refused, and I saw that the last resource must be adopted. I made my arrangements accordingly. On the evening I had fixed for the work I went to the theatre with two friends named Mackie and Milne. I caused them to drink a good deal, so as to confuse their ideas of time and circumstances. During the play I slipped away from them and went to Jean Gorbal's house. I was careful to assure myself that my movements were not observed. I got in by the back-door. She was preparing for bed, and was surprised to see me, but she was not at all displeased, for I had managed to make her regard me as a jovial companion. She insisted on preparing supper for me, and while she was doing so I again endeavored to persuade her to destroy the letters. She refused, and, while her back was turned towards me, I struck her down with the broken foil. Then I took the light and searched

for the place where she kept the documents, found them, and burned them. I took away some little things in a cloth, in order to suggest that the motive of the crime had been robbery. I threw the things into the canal, where they were found by the police. I had another calculation, which has been verified. In the event of the first motive I suggested failing, another motive would appear when Sarah Burnett's claim was made known, and the guilt would be attributed to Cargill's instrumentality. With that object in view, I caused Sarah to tell her story to Hadden, I knowing him to be a detective, and presuming that he and others would follow the tracks I had laid down for them. When Tavendale was arrested I was sorry for him, and meant to save him if it was possible to do so without endangering myself. On that account, and in order to place myself in a position to have the earliest knowledge of every winding of the evidence, I became his agent. Everything went as I had calculated until the day of the precognition of witnesses, when Hadden suddenly changed his tactics and his whole view of the case. Speirs, the inspector, incidentally made me aware of the change before I left the sheriff's chambers; and a visit he paid me soon afterwards convinced me that he was now, by some strange accident, on the right track. I watched his every movement, and when he went to Mr. Lyon's for the warrant to arrest me I followed him, was underneath the window of the library, and heard enough of what passed to satisfy me that my only chance was in flight. The pursuit was hotter than I anticipated, but I determined to baffle it. I endeavored to lead the officers off the scent by making them believe that I had gone to Edinburgh, and until the course was clear I decided to hide in Jean Gorbals's house. I believed that even Hadden would never suspect me of being there. My trick did not succeed with him, and my departure was delayed in consequence of his watchfulness; but I had made up my mind to attempt to get away last night, when my retreat was discovered. When I found the house surrounded, my last hope was to set it on fire and to escape in the excitement or die. I failed in the first object; I have won the second."

The statement had been carefully written down by Hadden; it was now read over to the dying man; he merely acknowledged that it was correct, and signed it. As the signatures of the witnesses were being appended he made another effort to speak.

"Is that enough to satisfy you that she is blameless?"

"We are satisfied," said Mr. Lyon, gravely.

A bitter smile quivered upon Hewitt's features, and then, his strength being utterly exhausted by the strain made upon it, he sank back in a state of coma.

Sarah had remained motionless by his side while he had been speaking, and now she dropped upon her knees by the bed, hiding her face among the clothes. Hadden gently raised her up and led her unresistingly from the place.

CHAPTER XLIX.

LAST WORDS.

Two days after making his confession Laurence Hewitt died, and there was only one person who experienced a degree of regret for his wasted life.

On the same day the remains of Mrs. Burnett were interred. After the funeral Mr. Hadden stood with Sarah in the parlor. She had been told of Hewitt's death, and she had said nothing. She looked now an aged woman, with the pitifully calm expression of utter hopelessness on her face.

"You will forget him," said Mr. Hadden, tenderly, taking her hand.

"Yes, when I can forget my own misery," she answered, dreamily.

"But you will forget that too. There is a future for everybody, and I say you have done enough to atone for whatever harm you were betrayed into perpetrating. You got Hewitt to confess when nobody else could; and you have given Miss Cargill your own statement of the case, which materially helps the other testimony in proving Tavendale to be blameless. At the same time it shows that you, my poor lass, have had no real share in the guilt. You have nothing to reproach yourself with now."

"Does my father think so?" she said bitterly.

"Mr. Cargill is a stern man, but he acknowledges your innocence so far as to make you a handsome allowance, which will enable you to live comfortably and happily."

And he forbids me to approach him again, or to communicate with his daughter?"

"But you forget she refuses to consent to that. She will not forsake you, and there is somebody else who has been true to you through all this."

She laid her hand in his.

"You have been very good to me, Mr. Hadden, and I can never repay you."

"Yes, you can, if you will only make yourself happy. Mr. Cargill won't have you for a daughter; well, who cares? I'll have you for a daughter. Thunder! Sarah, if you'll agree, I'll have you for a wife!"

She was startled by the abrupt proposal.

"Mr. Hadden!" she exclaimed, and he interrupted her.

"There, don't answer me just now; I'm serious. I have been thinking about it for the last two days, and it is the best way I can see of making you comfortable. You will change your name; we'll go and live somewhere in England, and you will soon forget, as other people will forget, the misfortunes which have given me the chance of a happiness I would have been afraid to dream about before."

Mr. Lyon speedily obtained Tavendale's release, and three weeks afterwards a marriage ceremony was performed at Mavisbank House. Alexander Tavendale was the bridegroom and Katherine Cargill the bride. There were few guests at the wedding, and those few, if they had not known something of the unhappy circumstances that had recently occurred, would scarcely have detected any signs of them in the glad faces of the millionaire's daughter and her husband.

The newly married pair started on a tour for a couple of months, and on their return Mr. Tavendale was to take his place as the acting partner of Messrs. Cargill & Co.

The change which had been wrought in Mr. Cargill took the form of excessive reserve and dislike to society of any kind. He rarely quitted the grounds of Mavisbank, and still more rarely ventured into the city. Mr. Lyon's representation of Sarah's conduct softened him towards her, although at first it failed to make him revoke his decision not to see her again.

When Katie told him that Sarah had married Mr. Hadden and had removed to England he frowned a little, and then said he was glad of it. If he had known the man better his pleasure would have been more genuine.

THE END.

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
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
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
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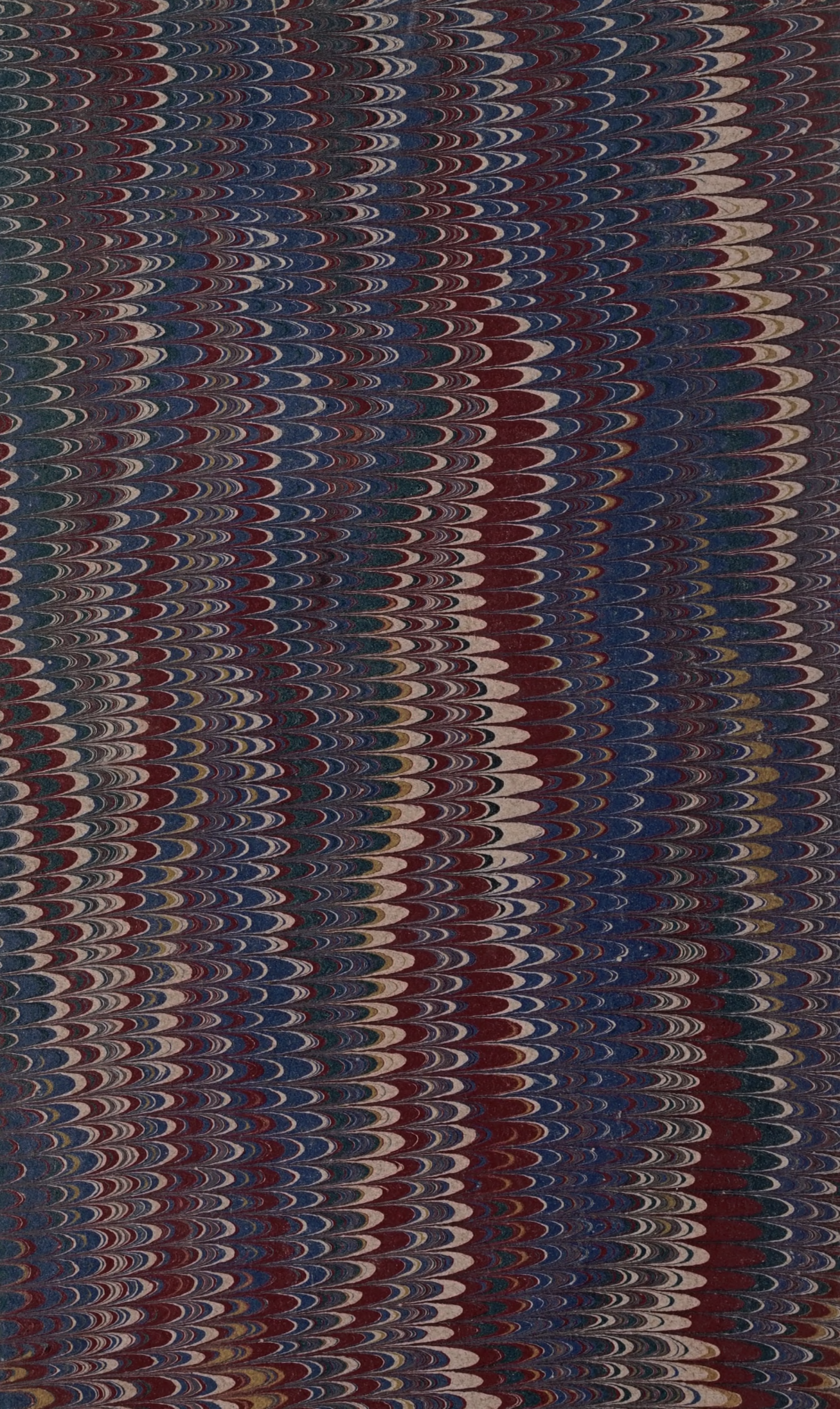
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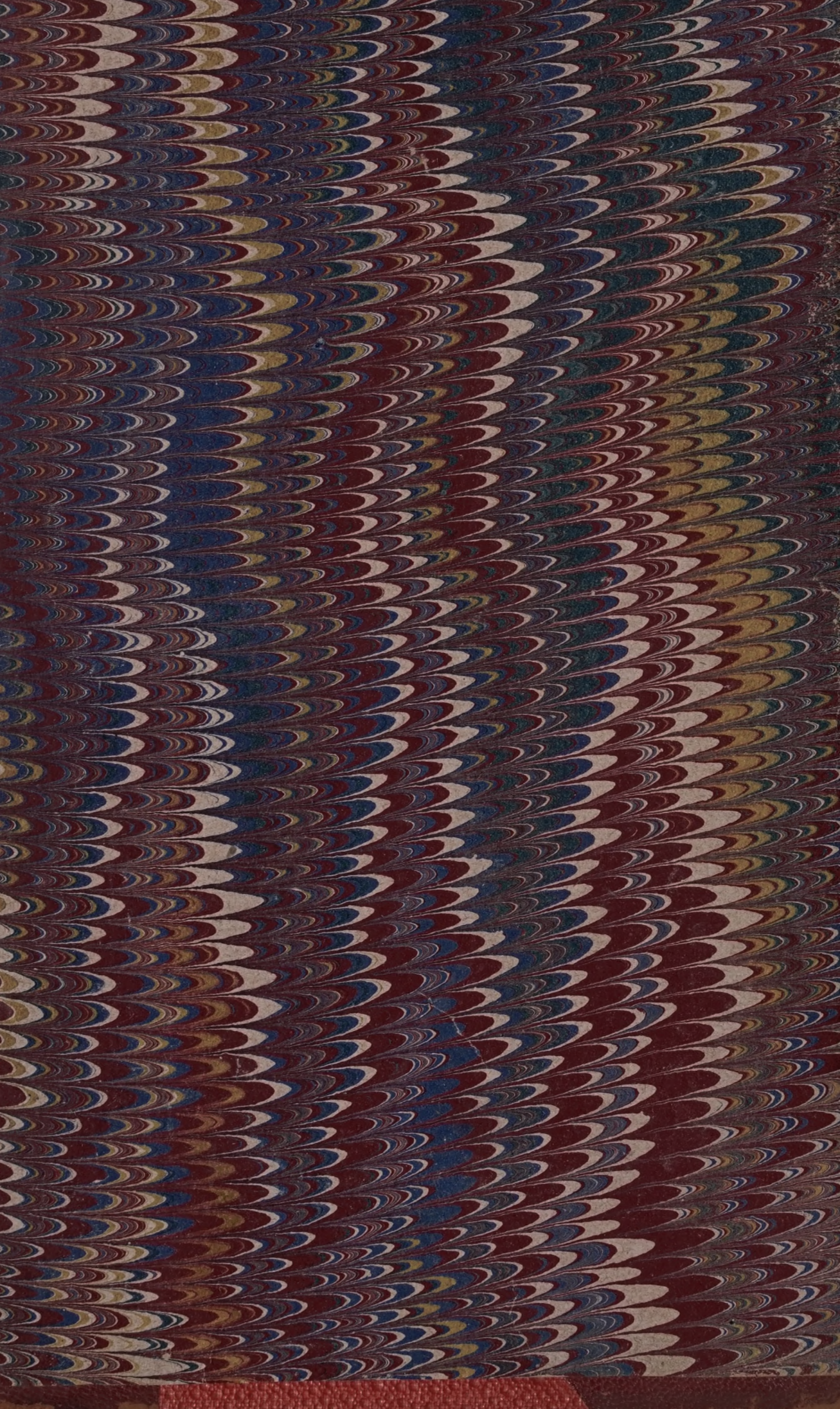
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